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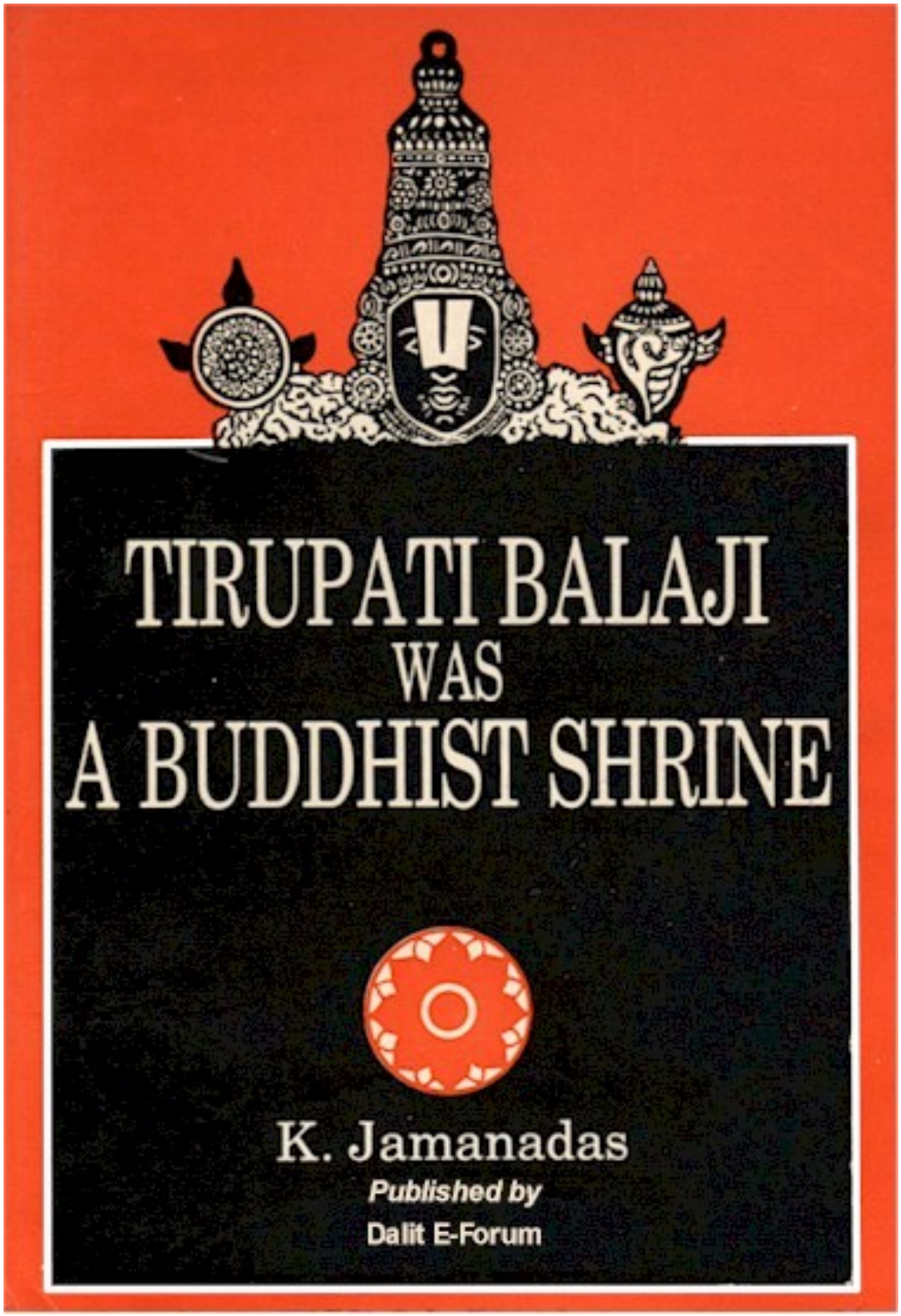

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Tirupati Balaji was a Buddhist Shrine

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by Prof. Dr. M. D. Nalawade, M.A., B.Ed., LL. B., Ph. D.,
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Pune University,

K. Jamanadas proves Tirupati Temple as a Buddhist Shrine

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FOREWORD

by Prof. Dr. M. D. Nalawade,
M.A., B.Ed., LL. B., Ph. D.,
Ex- Registrar, Retd. Professor and Head of History Dept.
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K. Jamanadas proves Tirupati Temple as a Buddhist Shrine

The book by K. Jamanadas "Tirupati Balaji was a Buddhist Shrine" has potential credibility to create controversies unknown to historical writing and the Hindu common folks who flock to worship Tirupati Balaji as one of the supreme deities. It is also a new challenge to indologist at a time when politically imbued scholars are engaged to wash out their hands by proving and disproving claims of Hindus and the Muslims against each other as they did over the issue of Ayodhya Shrines. The writing of K. Jamanadas, but stand to the test of researchers and it surpasses all controversial writings relating to Hindu Muslim difference.

Of course, a reader while going through this book requires to be equipped with relative knowledge of the Vedic forms and symbols of worship and the creation of monk hood, prayers and practice of Buddhist way of religious life. The author does not show at any place, his intention to religiously injure anybody and his presentation is purely of academic nature. Neither he intends to dethrone Tirupati Balaji from his present glory nor his popularity. He also does not make any comment on his devotees and his paraphernalia, he has with him. His research is to find out the truth hidden in the origin, growth and glory and his relation with the common man.

An eminent surgeon turned to be an indologist, K. Jamanadas stands for operational methods in the historical research. His study of Tirupati Balaji is the best in the science of architecture, theology and history. It seems from his book that all the essentially necessary and available sources and historical writings related to Balaji are carefully taken into consideration. Of course, one can not confidently say that a new evidence may not come up hereafter.

Religious life and socio-cultural interactions, so also their amalgamations on philosophical lines as well as in day today life among the people of this ancient land have created numerous problems for separating and identifying a particular set of features in a religious life either of the Buddhist or the Hindus except broad features and major differences. The land is the same and the people are also the same, naturally customs and traditions that they have carried on for ages together can not go far away from each other than they were in their previous religious life. There can not be a total change in the manners and etiquettes by changing and earlier religion. The walks of people in the earlier native religion, then to the Vedic which is named by the foreigners as Hinduism and then to Non-Vedic religions i. e. Buddhism and Jainism are through which this land is traveled and people have common following and practices even contradictory customs and philosophies they have through such livings of them although they learnt many things and have come across many images, idols and symbols of worships. The institution of the Viharas in Buddhist period is the first one of its kind as an institution of Temple which attracted the masses to keep its existence either in the manner the Buddhist have or the manner the Brahmins changed to their convenience to influence the masses. Originally Brahmins and their religion are centered around the system of the institution of Yajna. The Yajynas of various types such as Isthi, Pashu, Som, Chayan, Sava, Satra and others, for their selfish motives of seeking food, prestige and power. The very institution of Yadyna is to make commoners by way of traits, traps and tricks for sacrifices, the Brahmins are to loose nothing but in all the circumstances gain and gain much more beyond their demands and needs. This is how the institution of Yadyna works.

Nowhere it is found and no text of the Brahmin literature tells that in pre-Buddhist time the Brahmins are vegetarians. The offerings and oblations offered to gods and goddesses so also, the sacrifices made in the Yadynas are basically originated in the minds and tastes of the Brahmins. As being the non - vegetarians or the flesh eaters Brahmins ask the masses to offer such things to gods and to them also. History, therefore of the vegetarian gods in Hinduism opens a new avenue for fresh research in Indology. In pre-Buddhist times cow was never a pious animal and Brahmins of those days are found very fond of cow flesh. Rigvedas are genuine witnesses for that, and the river Charmnyavati is the best example. There is enough of information to know as to how both of her banks are covered over by skins and her waters are redden by the flesh blood of cows and other animals washed into her waters. The very name of the river Charmnyavati in a Rigveda tells many more things as Charm - means skin. The river banks of this river are used for performing Yadynas and the cows are used in sacrifices on large scale in the Yadynas. The whole delta of the river seems to have seen as how Cow Satra - Killing of cows is carried on and the name, therefore, of the river Charmnyavati in a Rigveda confirms the same.

The institution of Yadyna and sacrificing or killing cows in it is very much vital if it is understood against the agricultural background of those times. In those days no other animals but bullocks are used mostly for tilling the soil. Killing of the cows means no bullocks and no bullocks means no farming, no agricultural products.

As a result there is starvation and then submission to enemies or the rulers of the religion. The pre-Buddhist times, therefore, are worse in a regard to atrocities and injustices carried on, on the Peasant communities. Fortunately but lord Buddha understands the grave situation and stops cow sacrifices in the Yadynas and prevents the slaughtering of cows. He, thus becomes the First saviour of cows who preached farmers in ancient times not to offer cows to Brahmins and in the Yadynas. Under the circumstances it is very safe to hold a view that the adoption of cow as a pious one in later days and vegetarian food for gods and to the Brahmins for themselves is one of the greatest achievements of Buddhism, but it has to pay its cost in return of that achievement because the Brahmins adopted their means and methods to attract and lure the farming communities and attack Buddhism. It is thus the Hindus and the academicians have to admit that the creation of non - vegetarian gods is not the creation of the Brahmins. Therefore, it is in vain to trace out the origin of gods who are vegetarians in pre-Buddhist times. Morality and non-violence are never the cardinal principles of Brahmanical teaching and religion. They are the Buddhist and they are most unacceptable for the Brahmins in those early days.

The institution of Temple that the Brahmins practice and which exists at 'Tirupati Balaji' and at all the places of the Hindus is origin in Buddhism as K. Jamanadas rightly states that there are a good number of evidences to prove those facts. The walks of people in the ancient times from one sect or religion to another, from native religion to Vedic, Vedic to Non-Vedic religions that is Buddhism and Jainism and then back to Mixed- Vedic or Brahmanical religion, although, outwardly, have changed them in adopting different religious names and ultimately, the Brahmanism to which popularly called as Hinduism, they continued to practice many of the customs and traditions they liked most and were most difficult for them to unalienate. And to their convenience Brahmins have very skillfully converted Buddhists forms of worship and prayers quite in consonance to Brahmanical or Hindu ideals. Therefore, separation and identification of many images, idols and temples have become to show exactly that they either belong to Buddhists or Hindus but as Buddhism is made to disappear, Brahmins claimed them, in totality as the Hindus. And the history of Hindu vegetarian gods is certainly hidden in such changes and conversions from Buddhism to Hinduism.

The book is divided into four parts, but the main theme is dealt with in the second and third parts. Part first naturally begins with earlier findings and interpretations about the strife between Buddhism and Brahmanism. The mature saintly opinion of Swami Vivekananda that " Buddhism was mainly responsible for stopping or lessening the customs of drinking wine and killing living animals for sacrifice or for food in India" during the dominance and arrogance of the Brahmanical period is given at very appropriate instance. "Buddhism and Vaishnavism are not two different things" as is stated by the Great Swami to make clear that, "During the decline of Buddhism in India, Hinduism tool from her a few cardinal tenets of conduct and made them her own, and these have now come to be known as Vaishnavism". The author, not out of vindictive mood, but purely from academic interest collected sources and evidences, that too again from the Hindu saints and scholars to reveal the truth and truth alone as the proud heritage of this ancient land.

Brahmin's usurpation and imitation of the Buddhist customs, traditions and ideals, so also of forms of architecture , art and sculpture are very common and long back indologists and historians like R. G. Bhandarkar and D. D. Kosambi have brought all those thing to light. The sites at Ter, Aihole, Undavali, Ellora, Badrinatha, Ayodhya, Sringeri, Buddha Gaya and other religious important places have ably been shown as how richly influenced by Buddhist religion and culture and Brahmins have adopted them to their tastes to make the masses feel religiously at home as the Hindus. A fresh touch is given to reascertain for the proved facts by R. G. Bhandarkar, R. C. Dhere and others that the temples of Lord Jagannatha of Puri, Vithalla of Pandharpur, Ayyappa of Kerala, Srisailam of Andhra and many others as they were originally the Buddhist temples.

The real task of discovering Lord Tirupati as the Buddhist Shrine starts in the Second part. The history given of the worship of Vishnu needs to be added by the information of hymns in Rigveda. Max Mueller, Muir and Wilson who have well explained the importance of Vishnu and his Three Strides - Trivikrama. In the Purnsha - Sukta of the Yajurvda (1-31-32) has his description. And to collaborate the original concept of his creation and creating his three different images and the necessities of the Brahmins to convert him in appearance like lord Buddha are not unintentional and without any selfish motive. The author has ably proved that such efforts of the Brahmins have expected good results for them to show their superiority over Buddhism. The chapters- Hindu Shilpa Shastra on Vishnu Images, Nature Image of the Lord of Tirumalai, Is the Image of a Female deity, Is the Lord A Harihara Murthi, and the Account In Venkatechala Itihas Mala, are interesting and thought provoking. They make even commoners to think twice whether he is worshiping Buddhist images or Hindu images and what is his place in such a controversies The reference from a book of Shri. Sitapati P., on Shri. Venkatesvara is of great importance in support of author's theory on Tirupati Balaji. The reference runs -"The image (of Lord Tirumalai) bears some resemblance to the famous Bodhisattva Padmapani painting in cave I of the Ajanta Hills". This statement, is thus, self explanatory to record the attempts.

Part third of the book has debased old challenges of the Hindu claims in South India. How "not only ideals

and morals but also temples were taken over by Brahmins" has been aptly shown quoting well known authorities in the field and interpreting the original sources. It is very interesting to know the even Tirtha Yatras are started by the Buddhists and the Brahmins followed them from the Buddhist traditions to forget their earlier Buddhist religion and traditions. The Kalavars and Kalabhras, the names of clans and families quite in resemblance to Kalewar, Kalawad or Kalawade and Kalbhor, Bhor, Kalmegh and even Kale in Maharashtra are not without their historical roots. The Kalabhras mentioned by the author belonged to Chola country and are the Buddhist, but later on converted to Brahmanism.

The claim put forth by the author on Lord Tirupati Balaji as a Buddhist Shrine is based on sound theory and the evidences approved and accepted by the academicians. The fundamental questions which needs to be correctly answered to prove Tirupati Balaji as a Buddhist Shrine have the following points and which are well taken into account--

1. Yet why the attributes of Murthi are not allowed to be discussed openly and publicly?

2. Tirupati has no parivar devatas, his family members as gods. why?

3. And as to why it is the only ek-devata temple in whole of India.?

4. There was no regular worship of this Tirupati till 966 A. D, Why was it?

5.Why the various murthis are not recognized in this temple by their Agamic names?

The term "self manifested" applied to Tirumalai means that the Murthi or idol is existed earlier and it is at that place only. It is found by one Shudra Rangadasa. Then it is resurrected and worshiping it began. Before the Muslims came, Buddhists are the only people who opposed the Brahmins. But no Buddhist King nor Buddhist people are intolerant towards the Brahmins and no evidence is yet produced by any scholar proving that the Buddhists or any Buddhist King made efforts for destroying Brahmanical images, idols or places of worship. In fact the Brahmins have done hundreds of such things and they are in reality the enemies of the Buddhists. Hence allowing the Murthi or idol of Tirumalai uncared, then the quarrel over its possession in between the Vaishnavism and Shaivism, all such matter never happens in case of the original idols of Hindu or Brahmanical gods. Fortunately till this day this Lord is mistaken and misunderstood as Siva or Vishnu and as the Vaishnavaites and Shavaites claim him as if he belongs to one of the two, he grows in eminence. In reality the place and the idol are the Buddhist one, which eternally convey the message of well being to all people.

Temple institution is the creation of the Buddhist people and to grab that glory the Brahmins have usurped the Buddhists Temples for their selfish purpose and to attract the masses and then have converted those temples into Hindu forms making necessary changes and alterations. A good number of authorities have proved long ago and many of the authorities on the subject like R. G. Bhandarkar, Percy Brown, G. S. Ghurey, L. M. Joshi, D. D. Kosambi, K. A. N. Sastri, K. R. Vaidyanthan and others have been taken into consideration in the spirit and letters they presented numerous sources and evidences.

So far the story of Lord of Tirumalai stands historically and on the basis of the available sources it is a Buddhist Shrine. Right from its name, fashions and styles, so also customs like the Tonsure, offering of hair and Rathyatra it is all in one - the Buddhist way. Rathayatra is not originated in the Brahmanical life due to caste system and observance of untouchability and touch no one those who even from your kin and kith if they are unbathed and the women of their blood also. Under the circumstances Rathayatra tradition is certainly of the Buddhist origin and where ever it is carried on, the places and gods are the Buddhists, without any doubt. The author K. Jamanadas has maintained throughout his work a very high standard of argument and at all instances he placed either the authorities or the evidence in support of his argument and statements.

Although in the socio-cultural life of this country, it introverts all of those who have their origin in this land, to positively come up for better understanding as if it is vicissitude as the times and culture demand. A good lesson will also be derived out of the reading of this thesis for making this land as if of one people with an appeal to both the Hindus and the Muslims to know their best of heritage and noble humane way of life in Buddhism as one people, blessed and guided eternally by that Great, Supreme Lord, Bhagwan Buddha, the Great.

Contents Preface

Authors Preface

The subject of the consequences of fall of Buddhism is not really examined in all aspects by the Indian Scholars; whatever attempts have been made are limited to certain aspects. This is quite natural because of the dimensions involved in it. The area being vast, differing local conditions have different effects and different forms, in the attack on Buddhism and the procedure of its assimilation into Brahmanism. The declaration of the Buddha as an *avatar* of Vishnu had a tremendous impact on conversion, to make this conversion of Buddha into Vishnu more painless operation. This was the strategy of Brahmins to accept the Master for names sake and denounce the Doctrine. Also this was not accomplished in a day, and the time taken for this conversion also was so great, that the conversion was imperceptible. But it is not without having its scar marks. The origin of untouchability, rigidity of caste system, suppression of women in the Hindu society, various manipulations Brahmins had to do in their pantheon, various seemingly stupid injunctions, various rites, new development of the religious *vratas*, various inconceivable stories spread in the masses, the irrational thinking, and all that goes with it, had a method in madness. And that was to win the masses away from Buddhism, to strengthen the roots of *chaturvarnya*, and support the supremacy of Brahmins. What ensued was slavery for centuries, but the purpose of Brahmins was fulfilled. Even in slavery this class maintained its supremacy.

During the process which went on for centuries, many Buddhist shrines were converted for Brahmanical use. The purpose of this writing is to show that the great shrine of Tirupati was one of them, a claim which was not made by any previous author. Many ancillary subjects are discussed besides this main theme, and many new directions are shown for the scholars of tomorrow to pursue. Certain new claims have been made, e.g. the Rathas of Mahabalipuram are thought to be Buddhist, the Kalabharas are thought to be supporters of Buddhism, the traditional story of Alvaras describing the Murthi of Lord of Tirumalai is disputed, the evidence of Silappadhikaran is shown to be of no use, the importance of tonsure in Tirumalai is stressed and Rathayatra is shown as a Buddhist tradition. The importance of proxy image and the history of those times is stressed. The murthi is compared with other Vishnu images and the Buddhist images. The old history of people around the area traced and they are shown to be Buddhists. The tribal population was supporter of Buddhism as seen by Shankaracharya's destruction of Srisailam, a Buddhist centre of Chenchus, (a tribal community of that area) and also by traditional association of Jagannatha with tribal chiefs. Also it has been suggested that the institution of present day Devadasis is the indication of degradation of institution of Buddhist nuns. Lastly it has been shown that it is possible that Tirupati could be the Potalka of Huen Tsang.

No new facts are brought out, only a new interpretation is given to the facts already known to all. The facts are taken mainly from the four authors, acknowledged below, who wrote on Tirupati. None of them is biased in favour of Buddhism. They are all intimately connected with the Temple and are devotees of the Lord and are Vaisnavas by faith. The facts are so obvious to show that Tirumalai was a Buddhist shrine, that it is surprising how the scholars missed them. May be the possibility never occurred to them, at least they do not mention it, though in some writing a slight allusion could be traced.

Mostly secondary sources are used as it was felt that interpretations of other scholars would be more useful to the readers than my own. As far as possible the original quotations are given in detail even at the cost of making the writing more bulky. The word Tirupati is used rather loosely, sometimes as Tirupati on the Hills and sometimes as Tirupati on plains, but the context should make the meaning clear.

Points of Claim

The claim that Lord Venkatesvara was Buddhist shrine is based on the following grounds:

1. The Murthi itself is Buddhist, the weapons are provided at a later date. It does not conform with Vishnu Images, but is similar to Padmapani.

2. The area was inhabited by Tribal Buddhists.

3. The Murthi was not present in Mamulanar's time but the Shravana Festivals existed on the hill. The Shravana Festivals are traditionally a Buddhist phenomenon.

4. Traditionally "Mouni Guru" and "Self manifestation" were the devises used by the Brahmins for usurped Buddhist temples.

5. The list of earliest Vishnu Temples does not include Tirumalai, though temples a few miles away are included.

6. Tirumalai was unimportant temple for Hindus.

7. Mere praying by Alvaras as Vishnu does not make it a Vishnu image.

8. Tirumalai Tonsures are relics of Buddhist tradition.

9. The Rathayatra is a relic of Buddhist traditions.

10. The presence of Shudra's well inside temple denotes it being deity of lower castes.

11. The deity of lower castes had to be associated with Vishnu in the form of Almel Mangai though quite late.

12. The temple had to be renovated for making it agreeable to the Agama rules.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It was Khushwant Singh, during whose editorship of 'Illustrated Weekly of India', many articles were published on various social groups of India, during early seventies. That was the real depiction of the Indian Masses. One of those articles was on Tirupati Temple. That inspired me to undertake the study of Tirupati Temple.

The detailed information is obtained from the publications of T. T. D., the books by Dr. S. Krishnaswami Ayangar, T. K. T. Veera Raghavacharya and Dr. Ramesan and from Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's publication by P. Sitapati. I am extremely grateful to these authors.

I am highly indebted to the able guidance of Prof. B. L. Bhadke of Janata College of Education Chandrapur who gave very valuable suggestions, and to Principal I.T.Tembhare of Dr. Ambedkar College and late Prof.K. Patil of Dept. of History for their valuable inspiration. Very valuable suggestions were made by Prof. N. L. Sao of Siddhartha College, Bombay and Prof. B. K. Jha of Janata College of Education Chandrapur.

I am highly grateful to Shri V.J. Chaugule for his help in proof reading.

Jamanadas
Chandrapur
26.1.91

Second Edition

Though there have been costant demands for the book being translated into regional languages, it was not possible to do so for financial constraints. In 1998, however, the workers of local organizations voluntered to collect some amount as prepublication sale, for which, I must thank sarva sri Moon guruji, Dange, Gedam and many others. Similarly a couple of young typists sri Nale and Bujade volunteered to type out the Hindi MSS. Prof. Dharmik helped with proof reading and vetting. Ultimately, the Hindi edition was inagurated in August 1998 in Nagpur at the hands of BSP National President sri Kanshiram ji. This got exausted and second reprint became neccesary in 2000.

However, no translations are yet done in South Indian languages. For this the International Dalit Forum has been given all rights.

This is the Second English edition, that is being published as E-Book on Dalit Web sites. My thanks are due to these dedicated workers, who are painstakingly maintaining these web sites.

Many portions are revised and enlarged and the ambiguous points are clarified. However, the format is maintained, and the quotations are given in full, though it adds to size of the book. This was thought neccesary, as common people might find it difficult to get the original books.

Hope the readers like it.

Dr. K. Jamanadas
14th April 2001

Foreword Chapter 1

Chapter 1
Strife between Buddhism and Brahmanism

It is a well known fact that Lord Buddha had revolutionized the old Vedic religion and the whole country was once Buddhist. However, there was a counter-revolution and Brahmanism gained ground and the religion of Buddha, declined the country of its origin. The Bhikkus were killed and the remaining were compelled to migrate to foreign lands, taking with them some religious literature. The lay Buddhists were converted to Hindu fold. The Buddhist books disappeared from this land and when the western scholars were looking for the Buddhist Texts, no books were found except, perhaps a solitary instance of Manjushri mula kalpa found in Kerala. [Rahul Sankrutyayan, *"Buddhacharya"*, quoted by Bhau Lokhande:1979:p.107] On the point of absence of Buddhist texts Chaudhari has observed:

"... In a region where the philosophic doctrines of Buddhism and Jainism flourished for over three centuries, the absence of literature seems inconceivable. Perhaps there was a king of literary vandalism at the hand of literary vandalism at the hands of Hindu zealous..." [Chaudhari:1984:50]

However most of the Buddhist Doctrines, customs and practices among the masses in India remained in a distorted from and are still seen in the various groups of people. The Buddhist places of worship, the temples, the mutthas, viharas and the shrines which had been abandoned by bhikshu degenerated into ruins; but not all. Most of the important ones were appropriated by the Brahmins and converted for Brahmanic use. It is already shown by many scholars that the Lord Jagannatha of Puri, Lord of Badrikeshvara, and Vithoba at Pandharpur in Maharashtra were once Buddhist. But nobody has, up till now, to out knowledge, has shown that Lord Venkatesvara, the presiding deity on the Hill at Tirupati which is very important deity of South India and has also become very popular in the North as Balaji among the Hindus, to be a Buddhist deity and that at one time it was a worshiping place sacred to Buddhist and had been taken away from them in days of decline of Buddhism. The endeavor of this writing is to show that this famous shrine of Tirupati, which is now being worshipped in the form of Vishnu, was actually a Buddhist centre of olden times.

Residual Effects of Buddhism on Brahmanism

It goes without saying that the present day Hinduism is mostly influenced by Buddhism. Let us see what the scholars have to say about the influence of Buddhism on Hinduism and its residual effects which are seen even now, L. M. Joshi, observes:

"In his speeches and writings Swami Vivekananda has often noted the diverse Buddhist influences on Hinduism. He had observed that "Modern Hinduism is largely Pauranika, that is, post-Buddhistic in origin." He pointed out that Buddhism was mainly responsible for stopping or lessening the customs of drinking wine and killing living animals for sacrifice or for food in India. He rightly traced the origin of Hindu images and temples to Buddhist models. About the relation of Vaishnavism to Buddhism, he was declared that "Buddhism and Vaishnavism are not two different things. During the decline of Buddhism in India, Hinduism took from her a few cardinal tenets of conduct and made them her own, and these have now come to be known as Vaishnavism." It should be noted here that Vaishnavism does not consist mainly of a few cardinal tenets of conduct. The Swami is briefly referring to moral principles and practices, such as *ahimsa, karuna, maitri,* respect for the *guru*, control of the mind and the senses of *yoga*, etc. which Buddhism transmitted to Vaishnavism. The Bodhisattva ideal and the idea of Buddhavatar also became integral parts of Vaishnava theology." [Joshi:1977:348]

Not only ideals and morals but also temples were taken over by Brahmins

About the ideals and morals taken up by Brahmanism to make it stand among the people of this country, L.M.Joshi further observes:

"Speaking of Buddhist ascetic ideals and institutions, Swami Vivekananda has said that the monastic vow and renunciation began to be preached all over India since the time of the Buddha, and **Hinduism has absorbed into itself this Buddhist spirit of renunciation. The ochre robe found a lasting home in Hinduism also. The Hindu teacher not only accepted the Buddhist institution of monks. They occupied the Buddhist monasteries also. The many monasteries that you now see in India occupied by monks were once in the possession of Buddhism.** The Hindus have only made them their own now by modifying them in their own fashion. Really speaking, the institution of Samnyasa originated with the Buddha. In conclusion the Swami has stated that **Hinduism has become so great only by absorbing all the ideal of the Buddha.** Swami Vivekananda has been a pivotal figure in modern Hinduism and his opinions are representative of the educated Hindus." [Ibid:348, emphasis ours]

Social conditions were influenced

About the impact of Buddhism on the social conditions in this country and how it influenced the conditions of women and shudras, L.M.Joshi again, observes:

"Buddhism made profound impact in Indian social life in several ways. Its leaders and teachers continuously criticized the theory of castes and ridiculed the false claims to superiority based on birth (jati) and colour (varna). On the other hand, Buddhism opened the doors to higher religious life and the highest goal for all those who sought them, including the members of the lower strata of society. Although Buddhism was not directly concerned with the abolition of castes, it strongly opposed the caste system and repeatedly taught the evils of casteism. Another aspect of Buddhist social inhibition. Buddhism along with Jainism but unlike Brahmanism gave the equality of opportunity in religious culture to women. Some of the female members of the earliest ascetic order known to history were the Buddhist Theris or nuns whose religious poetry has come down to us in the Theriagatha. The eminent position attained by large number of women in Buddhist history, viz. Khema, Patacara, Dhammadinna, Subha, Kisa, Sujata, Visakha, Samavati, Ambapali, Upplamanna, and Soma, etc. shows that Buddhism had done much for the emancipation of women in Indian society. The same is true with regard to the Buddhist contribution towards the upliftment of shudras." [Ibid:368]

What happened to the Buddhist Population

After the fall of Buddhism, what happened to masses who were in majority? It is already shown by Dr. Ambedkar that many among the Buddhists were condemned to be untouchables. If proper study is made, we feel that it is possible even now to recognize the population groups who got converted to Hinduism. Some minor groups are identified by Joshi:

"It has been pointed out by scholars that the cult of Dharmathakura had been current among the people of low class, such as the Domas, Hadis, Fishermen, Carpenters, etc. In the Brahmanical social scheme these castes belong to the shudra order. S. B. Dasgupta describes their religion as "a mixture of later Buddhistic ideas and practices with the popular Hindus beliefs and practices of the non-Aryan aborigines." According to him "Dharma cult owes many of its elements to that form of later Buddhism, which is known as Mantrayana and latterly and most commonly, as Vajrayana." He suggests some Muslim influences on the Dharmathakura cult, and contrariwise, some Buddhist influence on the Muslims of Bengal." [Ibid:350]

However, it is our feeling that many more, more important and bigger groups from modern Indian population can be identified to have been originally Buddhists. Nagendranath Basu has investigated the forest areas of Mayurbhanj and discovered the people there, being Buddhists. Dr. Haraprasad Shastri, writing in 1911 in his Introduction to this book of Shri Nagendranath Basu, found out some groups in modern population, who were originally Buddhists. He mentions among them the followers of Goraksha Nath, Dharmaghadiya Yogis, many Guptas, Baidyas, Kars, Goldsmiths, Carpenters and Painters, Business class of Bengal, most of the Kayasthas, Sonar Baniyas, Vaishnava Sahajiyas. [Basu:p.12]

More work needs to be done to identify other classes who became Buddhists, in addition to those among Buddhists, who have been condemned to be untouchables. (1) One of the clues could be that all those groups for whom derogatory remarks and various hidden, and not so hidden, abuses are showered in the medieval Brahmanic texts, did in fact belong to Buddhist sects. (2) The other clue could be all those groups of people who are and were successful in getting educated, and acquiring literacy in spite of opposition of Brahmins during the middle ages could be conveniently recognized and identified as Buddhists of olden times. (3) Many groups in higher castes also who are not given status of equality within the same caste, can be identified as Buddhist of olden times. If some work is done on these lines, we feel that scholars would be surprised to find in the Brahmanic texts of medieval ages, a very large number of groups.

Though Hinduism has borrowed all these tenets from Buddhism, it is still different from Buddhism. Joshi observes:

"Although modern Hindu culture has a great many elements of the Buddhist culture, the two are not identical. The Hindus consider the Buddha as a maker of Hinduism and worship Him as an avatara of God; Hinduism has accepted all the great and noble elements of Buddhism. These facts do not alter the historical truth that Buddhism is different from Hinduism and Hinduism is different from Buddhism. The Hindus may worship the Buddha, because their religion is largely based on the teachings of the Buddha. The Buddhists do not worship either Vishnu or Siva, not is their religion based on the Vedas." [Joshi:p.330]

Image Worship originated amongst the Buddhist

A few people who like to think that roots of everything are found in Vedas, think that practice of Image

worship started from Vedic times. However, consensus of opinion is that it originated as a Buddhist practice. For example Joshi has following to say:

"The worship of icons, images and symbols also seems to have been introduced by the Buddhist and the Jains, although its ultimate origin may be traced to the pre-vedic Harappan culture. In historical times the art and ritual of image worship was popularized first by Buddhist. It soon became an essential feature of all the sects of puranic Brahmanism. There is remarkable correspondence in the iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical sculptures and painting of gods and goddesses." [Joshi:p.336]

Tirtha yatras were started by Buddhists

L. M. Joshi observes:

"The practice of visiting the holy places (tirthas) possibly originated with the Buddhists. In the *Maha parinibban sutta* visit to the spots sanctified by the Buddha is recommended. In the Vedic texts, a tirtha was understood to mean a place where animal sacrifices were performed. But in the Epics and Puranas, which teach the cult of tirthayatra or pilgrimage, killing of animals in sacrifice in holy place is prohibited. The eighth chapter of the *Lankavarara sutta* perhaps contains the strongest exposition of vegetarianism which became central feature of Vaishnavism in medieval India." [Ibid:337] Shri K. A. Nilkanata Sastri acknowledges this fact as follows:

"...The temple and the palace are both indicated by one word koyil in Tamil, and prasada in Sanskrit, and it universally recognized that temple - worship was not part of the original Vedic religion..." [Sastri:1966:64]

It is usually accepted that the first image that was manufactured in India for the purpose of the worship was that of the Buddha. Whether it was first manufactured at Mathura or in Gandhara could be a debatable point, but that the images of Vishnu and other Hindu gods were manufactured later than the image of Buddha, is universally accepted by scholars.

When did the Buddha worship start

The worship of Buddha was started with the emergence of Mahayana, which is a fact accepted by almost all scholars. We will only see what L.M.Joshi has to say:

"...The *Mahaparinibban sutta* narrates how the nobles and the commoners, both men as well as women, of the Malla clan honoured the body of the Tathagata by dancing and singing in accompaniment with instrumental music, with garlands and perfumes. Similar artistic activities full of ceremonial dignity and aesthetic sense are reported in the *Lalitavistara* and the *Buddhacarita* to have been performed by men and women of Kapilvastu at the birth of the Bodhisattva Sidhartha. "...With the emergence of the Mahayana, the Buddha image became the central plank of popular Buddhism and it was manufactured in a thousand plastic forms. Manufacturing religious icons and emblems was viewed as pious deed. So was excavating viharas in live rocks and erecting shrines and stupas. The Pali *Apadanas* as well as the Sanskrit *Avadanas* eminently display popular enthusiasm for adoration (puja) of emblems, such as the wheel, bowl, foot-prints, the Bodhi tree and other items connected with the Master's earthly existence. From about the beginning of the Christian era images of the Buddha began to come into existence, and revolutionized rituals of worship not only in Buddhism but also Brahmanism. In place of sacrificial rituals temple rituals now become popular..." [Joshi:p.158]

In contrast to this, the worship of Brahmanic images started mostly from Gupta period.

Struggle between Brahmins and Buddhists was the cause of origin of Image Worship among Hindus

Dr. Ambedkar, while discussing the origin of untouchability in his book 'The Untouchables', has given a short description of the struggle between Brahmins and Buddhists, and described why Brahmins had to start, *inter alia*, temple worship. This is what he says:

"To my mind, it was strategy which, made the Brahmins give up beef-eating and start worshipping the cow. The clue to the worship of cow is to be found in the struggle between Buddhism and Brahmanism and means adopted by Brahmanism to establish its supremacy over Buddhism. **The strife between Buddhism and Brahmanism is a crucial fact in Indian history. Without the realization of this fact, it is impossible to explain some of the features of Hinduism.** Unfortunately students of Indian history have entirely missed the importance of this strife. They knew there was Brahmanism. But they seem to be entirely unaware of the struggle for supremacy in which these creeds were engaged and that their struggle which extended for 400 years has left some indelible marks on religion, society and politics of India. "This is not the place for describing the full story of the struggle. All one can do is to mention a few salient points.

Buddhism was at one time the religion of the majority of the people of India. It continued to be the religion of the masses for hundreds of years. It attacked Brahmanism on all sides as no religion had done before. Brahmanism was on the wane and if not on the wane, it was certainly on the defensive. As a result of Buddhism, the Brahmanism had lost all power and prestige at the Royal Courts and among the people. They were smarting under the defeat they had suffered at the hands of Buddhism and were making all possible efforts to regain their power and prestige. Buddhism had made so deep an impression on the minds of the masses and had taken such a hold of them that it was absolutely impossible for the Brahmins to fight the Buddhism except by accepting their ways and means and practicing the Buddhist creed in its extreme form. After the death of Buddha his follower started setting up the image3s of the Buddha and building stupas. The Brahmins followed it. They, in their turn, built temples and installed in the images of Siva, Vishnu and Rama and Krishna etc., - all with the object of drawing away the crowd that was attracted by the image worship of Buddha. That is how temples and images which had no place in Brahmanism came in to Hinduism. The Buddhist rejected the Brahmanic religion which consisted of Yajna and animal sacrifice, particularly of the cow. The objection to the sacrifice of the cow had taken a strong hold of minds of masses especially as they were an agricultural population and the cow was a very useful animal. The Brahmins in all probabilities had come to be hated as the killer of the cow in the same as the guest had come to be hated as Goghna, the killer of the cow by the householder, because whenever he came, a cow had to be killed in his honour. That being the case, the Brahmins could do nothing to improve their position against the Buddhist except by giving up the Yajna as a form of worship and the sacrifice of the cow." [Ambedkar: Untouchables: 1969:146]

In spite of the fact that the temple worship was not part of their religion, the Brahmins, in days of decline of Buddhism, when they got an opportunity, did in fact take away the Buddhist temples, viharas and places of worship for their own use. This is the story which is the subject matter of the next few chapters.

Preface Chapter 2

Chapter 2
Some examples of Brahmanic usurpation

As is well known, the archaeological remains of Buddhism speak themselves of the glory of Buddhism in ancient times. L.M.Joshi has following to say:

"...Even if we judge only by his posthumous effects on the civilization of India, Sakyamuni Buddha was certainly the greatest man to have been born in India. Before becoming a major faith and civilization force in the world, Buddhism had been a mighty stream of thought and a tremendous fountain-head of human culture in its homeland. Ignorance or neglect of the available Buddhist literature is not the only shortcoming of the traditional approach. The fact that the knowledge of Indian archaeology if confined to a handful of scholars in another factor which has prevented most students from viewing Buddhist culture in its entirety.

Moritimer Wheeler observes that 'archaeologically at least we cannot treat Buddhism merely as a heresy against a prevailing and fundamental Brahmanical orthodoxy.' For in spite of the ravages of time and destruction by Indian and foreign fanatics, Buddhism is still speaking vividly and majestically through its thousand of inscriptions, about one thousand rockcut sanctuaries and monasteries, thousands of ruined stupas and monastic establishments, and an incalculable number of icons, sculptures, painting and emblems, that it prevailed universally among all the classes and masses of India for over fifteen centuries after the age of the Buddha, and that its ideas of compassion, peace, love, benevolence, rationalism, spiritualism and renunciation had formed the core of the superstructure of ancient Indian thought and culture." [Joshi:1977:357]

This is the state of affairs, even if we consider only the Buddhist structure in their ruined condition. So many of the Buddhist monuments were, however, not allowed to degenerate to ruins. They were taken up for Brahmanical use. This happened in all areas of India. As far as Buddhist shrines in Andhra Pradesh, where Tirupati is situated, are concerned, it is an accepted fact that many shrines of Buddha in Andhra Pradesh, were converted for Brahmanical worship.

Andhra and Deccan

K.A.N. Sastri observed:

"...In the Andhra country also, where Buddhism had flourished in great strength in the early centuries of the Christian era, there came about a strong Hindu revival ... Mathas grew up and were occupied by monks ... and ... many Buddhist shrines and viharas were turned to Hindu uses..." [Sastri:1966:434]

"...Its (Buddhism) decline in Andhradesa, where it had flourished in the early centuries A.D., was noticed by Yuan Chwang, and this decline proceeded further after his time. the renascent Hinduism of the period began the worship of the Buddha at Amaravati as an incarnation of Vishnu and into Hindu shrines..." [Sastri:1966:436]

Ter and Chezarala

"At Ter is Sholapur district and Chezarala in the Krishna district are found Buddhist chaitya halls built in bricks, perhaps in the fifth century A.D. and surviving to this day because they were appropriated to Brahmanical uses after the decline of Buddhism. We refer to the Trivikrama temple at Ter and the Kapoteshvara temple at Chezarala. These two small buildings, each not more than 30 feet long, are now the only means of judging the external appearance of the Buddhist structural temple as the rock-cut chaityas has no exteriors except their facades." [Sastri:1966:448]

Mention may be made here, of other experts in Archaeology and Sculpture who agree with this finding of Sastri. Sri. K. R. Shreenivasan agrees:

"Fortunately there are two apsidal shrines of this period of original Buddhist dedication and subsequent conversion to the Hindu creed, still existing in their entirety. They are the Trivikrama temple at Ter, in Western Deccan, and Kapoteswara Temple at Chejerala, in coastal Andhra. Both are dated earlier than 600 A.D., but not earlier than 300 A.D. Of the two, the Kapoteswara may be the earlier one judged from the stylistic and architectural points of view." [Sreenivasan:1971:24]

Aihole

Regarding the Durga Temple at Aihole Sri. K.A.N. Sastri mentions that it was also a Buddhist Chaitya.

"Very different from Ladh Khan is the Durga temple which was another experiment seeking to adapt the Buddhist chaitya to a Brahmanical temple" [Sastri:1966:451]

It may be pointed out here that name of temple as Durga has nothing to do with the famous Brahmanical goddess Durga and it was never dedicated to Her.

Undavalli

Similar is the case of Anantasayangudi cave-temple, Sri K. R. Shreenivasan confirms that this was originally for a Buddhist dedication.

"...A similar rock-cut cave excavation, now called Anantasayangudi in Undavalli on the south bank of the Krishna, also belongs to this class. It is perhaps of the Vishnu-kundin times and was meant originally for a Buddhist dedication..." [Sreenivasan:1971:33]

"...The Anantasayangudi cave-temple at Undavalli is the largest of the group and is three-storied structure akin to the Ellora Buddhist Caves 11 and 12, the Do-tal and Tin-tal. It belongs to the seventh century if not earlier, and was perhaps intended originally for the Buddhist creed, but was adopted later for a Vishnu temple, the principal deity being a recumbent Vishnu or Anantasayin..." [Sreenivasan:1971:81]

Ellora

About cave no. 15 of Ellora, it is accepted by all scholars that it is a case of reconditioning of Buddhist shrine for Brahmanical use.

"The Dasavatara, or cave no.15, is an odd example in as much as it is the only two-storied cave-temple or cave-complex of a very large size. It is apparently a case of reconditioning of what was all prepared and cut out for Buddhistic requirements. It would mark the earliest example of Rashtrakuta work at Ellora. Its front pavilion carries the inscription of Dantidurga (c. 752-56) and is an accomplished piece of contemporary rock architecture." [Sreenivasan:1971:72]

About same fact Yazdani observes:

"... The revival of Brahmanic faith in the Deccan had begun during the rule of Chalukyas, who built rock-hewn shrines of that faith at Badami, the seat of their government; but they were tolerant to the followers of Buddhist religion and the shrines of the latter faith continued to the built under their regime. During the reign of Rashtrakutas, who ousted the Chalukyas from the greater part of their kingdom in the Deccan, an aggressive religious spirit seems to have prevailed, for they not only converted Buddhist viharas into the temples of their own faith, *fn.* but also built new shrines on such a grand scale as to eclipse in the eyes of their co-religionist the glory of Buddhist religion..." [Yazdani :1960 :731]

To chisel out Buddhist images was the method used

Yazdani further observes:

"Cave XV, called the Dasavatara, was originally a Buddhist vihara, and the images of Buddha, although chiseled off with care from many a niche, may still be noticed in some places. This cave has a long inscription of Dantidurga carved over its entrance." [fn.]

As to how conversion of these shrines was effected Yazdani observes:

"...Dasavatara, which was originally a Buddhist shrine and was later converted into Brahmanic temple and adorned with both Shaivite and Vaishnavite bas-reliefs.." [Yazdani :1960 :754]

About other Buddhist shrines he has observed:

"In the sphere of religion Buddhism had lost ground more and more since the days of Huen Tsang, and the Buddha of Amararama (Amaravati) had in fact come to be worshiped as an incarnation of Vishnu; the other four aramas of Bhimapura, Dakaremi, Palakolanu, and Drakshrama are believed to have been once famous centres of Buddhism. But subsequently became Hindu Shrines..." [Yazdani :1960 :500]

Shaivas and Vaishnavas were together in this

Thus we find that to chisel out old Buddhist images and replacing them with newly carved Brahmanic images was popular method of converting Buddhist shrines into Brahmanic ones, and also we find that

Vaishnavas and Saivas were together in this. For example, in Ellora cave XV we find, after the chiseling out Buddhist images, one wall occupied by Vaishnavas and other by Shaivas:

"...Sculptures on one side are mostly Vaishnava while those on the other are entirely Shaiva..." [Sastri:1966:543]

As a matter of fact there are innumerable cases, but it is not necessary to see more examples. The following will suffice as examples of Buddhist shrines taken over for Brahmanical use in days of decline of Buddhism.

Bengal

"...Even today images of Buddha are worshiped as Siva or Vishnu in many places in Bengal..." [Majumdar R.C.: 1966: 402]

Puri

"...One of the centres founded by Samkara was located in Puri in Orissa. According to Swami Vivekananda, a leading modern teacher of Samkara's school, 'the temple of Jagannath is an old Buddhistic temple. We took this and others over and re-Hinduised them. We shall have to do many things like that yet.' ..." [Joshi L. M.: 1977: 351]

Badrinatha

Name of Adi Samkara is associated with this temple. Dave observes:

"The tradition is that the temple of Badrinarayan was erected by Adi Shankaracharya in about 9the Century A.D. He secured the image which was lost, by diving deep in the Narada Kunda. ...(he) founded here one of his four principal monasteries known as the Uttaramnaya Jyotirnath." [Dave J.H.: 1970: 142]

Like other Buddhist centers taken over by Brahmins, here also, the caste restriction are not strict.:

"The Naivedya of Badari, if offered, can never be refused. There no untouchability before the Lord, no impurity in accepting the Lord's Prasad from any one. ... One refusing the Prasad with ignorance and a sense of superiority is worse than a chandala unfit for any religious duty. Even touched by the lowliest (chandala), it is never impure." [Dave: 1970: 15. Chandala is the original word in Sanskrit quotation]

Dave describes this Murthi:

"...Inside the temple Lord Narayana is seated in Padmasana with two hands in yoga mudra. The image is of black saligram stone about three feet high..." [Dave: 1970:145]

L.M.Joshi avers that this Image is the image of Buddha.

"...Among other temples of the Buddhist, took over by the Hindus, mention may be made of the one at Badrinath in Garhwal in which **even the original Buddha image is still in situ and worshiped as that of Vishnu...**" [Joshi: 1977: 351, emphasis ours]

Mathura

It is an accepted ancient Buddhist centre, where Buddhism flourished till about 9th century. It was such an important centre of Buddhism that the ancient school of Buddha images goes by its name.

"Mahakachhayana, one of the famous disciples of Buddha, actively preached Buddhism in Mathura. When Buddha visited the city, he noticed the abundance of women-folk. It is mentioned as the most famous place in Millinda Panha. Upagupta, the preceptor of Emperor Asoka whom he converted to Buddhism was the son of Gupta and a perfumer. The accepted view is that Upagupta was born in Mathura where he built a big Buddhist monastery which existed till the 7th century A.D. He converted many people of Mathura to Buddhism. Eighteen thousand pupils attained sainthood through Upagupta. The well-known courtesan Vasavadatta, who was ultimately converted to Buddhism was a resident of Mathura. Fa-Hein called Mathura the Peacock city. In his day Buddhism was flourishing here. Huen Tsang also visited it and found it 20 li in circuit. In his day there were five Deva temples, three stupas built by Asoka, twenty Buddhist monasteries and 2000 Buddhist priests." [Dave: 1970: 88]

After the fall of Buddhism, Brahmins erected temples on Buddhist sites and established their supremacy.

"Bhutesvara Mahadeo's Temple is the place where there was the stupa of Sariputta, one of the famous disciples of Buddha.

"The Kesav Deo Temple was built on the site of the great Buddhist monastery called Yasa Vihara." [Dave: 1970: 90]

However, this temple was destroyed by Mohammed of Gazni in 1017 A.D.

Ayodhya

That the parts of Siva-Linga at Ayodhya and Bansi are Buddhist Relics, is well known. I.K. Sarma observes:

"...We shall cite here a unique linga shrine near Buddhist Dhauli, the ancient Tosali, capital of Kalinga 11 Km. South of Bhuvaneswar. The unusually high Bhaskaresvara Linga, 2.75m. high and 3.70m. circumference at the bottom, on excavation, was found to be resting on a lateritic pedestal shaped into an agrhapitha. This pillar was recognized as an Asokan Pillar broken at the top. A monolithic Lion capital was recovered from a nearby trench. Several other relics (Bell capital, massive yaksa images) of Asokan vintage were found and now preserved in the State Museum Bhuvaneswar. **This appears to be the case with the lotiform bell with Mauryan polish used as the base of Siva linga in the Nagesvaranatha temple at Ayodhya, Dist. Faizabad, U.P.; Lotiform capital and leg part of a lion in the Linga set up at Bansi, Dist. Basti, Eastern U.P. From these evidences we can infer that certain sacred Buddhist Sthalas were converted into Shaiva Ksetras after a general decline of Buddhism..."** [Sarma I. K.: 1988: 10, emphasis ours]

Sringeri

On the authority of Journal of Mythic Society, p.151 and Eliot, Hinduism & Buddhism vol. II p.211, L.M.Joshi observes:

"Samkara is known to have founded his Sringeri matha on the site of a Buddhist monastery..." [Joshi: 1977: 314]

Bodhi Gaya Buddha temple at Buddha Gaya was in the custody of a Shaivite Mahanta and he used to extract money by applying *gandha* to forehead of the image of Buddha upto beginning of 20th century. Even today, in the managing committee of that temple, non Buddhist Hindus only dominate. [Lokhande: 1979: 120]

Sarnath

There is an ancient image of Buddha near Sarnath, which is famous by the name of "Siva - Sangheswara" (Siva - the Lord of Sangha). [Lokhande: 1979: 120]

Delhi

A Buddha image is worshiped near Delhi in the name of "Buddho - mata" [Lokhande: 1979: 120]26

Nalanda

There are two beautiful images of Buddha near Nalanda. One is popular as Teliya Baba (one who is pleased by pouring oil on him) and the other as Dheliya Baba (one who is pleased by being beaten up by a lump of earth). [Lokhande: 1979: 120]

Guntepalli

Coming back again home, i.e. near Tirupati, even the Mahanagaparvata (Guntepalli) was not spared in Andhara Pradesh. I.K.Sarma observes:

"...Mahanagaparvata regained its pristine position as a Buddhist centre from early first century and renovation works went on briskly, perhaps, after a temporary spell of aggrandizement by the Jains. Even some new Vihara caves were established (nos. 36, 3, 38 and 39). The later inscriptions listed here under not only indicate Mahayana- Vajrayana affiliation of the establishment but proclaim the continuance of Mahanagaparvata as a great Buddhist centre in the ancient Vengi country right upto 11the century A.D. ... **The place was finally usurped by the Saivites and the oldest circular Caitya cave was named as Dharamalingesvara and a Nandi was placed in its front. The place is venerated as a great living ksetra by the locals and on Sivaratri day, particularly the female folk, worship the Caitya as a**

bestower of fecundity. [Sarma: 1988: 85, emphasis ours]

Role of Puranas

It is noteworthy that Buddhist places were regularized as Hindu temples by writing Puranas. Role of Puranas is well recognized in re-establishing Brahmin supremacy, but it is not properly understood that one of the main aims of writing Puranas was to claim Buddhist places of worship. L.M.Joshi observes:

"...Not only the Buddhist holy places and shrines were occupied and transformed into Hindu Tirthas and devalayas and this occupation of non-Brahmanical places and sanctuaries were strengthened by invented myth or pseudo- history (purana), but the best elements of Buddhistic culture, including the Buddha, were appropriated and homologized in sacred books..." [Joshi: 1977: 338]

Chapter 1 Chapter 3

Chapter 3
Jagannatha of Puri is Buddhist

Swami Vivekananda's view

Swami Vivekananda's view that Jagannatha Temple of Puri is an old Buddhist Temple is already mentioned before. Dr. Bhau Lokhande has reviewed the subject in detail. Following is the summary of it. [Lokhande: 1979: 120] **Lokhande summarizes**

1. Poet Manohardas writes in his Amarkosha that Buddha is Arjuna and Krishna is param vishva atma. (Nagendra Nath Basu- Bhakti Margi Bouddha Dharma. Trans. By Narmadeshvara Chaturvedi, Allahabad, samt. 2018, p.173.

2. Buddha was also called Hari. (Ibid.,p.176)

3. Dr. Jadunath Sarkar has quoted a poem called 'Daru- Brahma' by a poet from Orissa, wherein Jagannatha himself says, I am incarnation of Buddha, I will give salvation to beings in Kaliyuga." (Sarkar, *India Through Ages,* p.177)

4. According to Nagendranath Basu, Buddhaswami of "Alekhlila" can be considered a Dhyani Buddha and Jagannatha as Bodhisattva or Padmapani and there is no doubt that the image of Lord Jagannatha was originally a Buddha image. (Ibid., p.177)

5. From a book Yashomatimalika it is clear that upto 41st regnal year of Mukundadeva, Lord Jagannatha was considered only as Buddha. That Mukundadeva was a great devotee of Buddha is known from Lama Taranath.

6. Behind Jagannath Temple at Puri, there is a huge stone image of Lord Buddha in Bhumisparsha mudra. In front of this image a big wall is erected. This image, which could have told many a thing to the students of Ancient Indian History, has now become a sealed book. This wall must have been erected so that the image of Buddha should not be visible to the people. The tradition of considering Lord Jagannatha as secret Buddha must have been started since then. Similar story is told about the image at Badrinath.

7. Ratha Yatra at Puri of Jagannatha, Balaram and Subhadra is nothing else, but a transformation of the Ratha Yatra of Buddha surrounded by Bodhisattvas and this Yatra was seen by Chinese pilgrim Fa Hein with his own eyes in the 5th century A.D (Sarkar, *India Through Ages* p.33)

Lord Jagannatha was worshipped by Tribals

Apart from account given by Dr. Bhau Lokhande there are other points to be noted about Jagannatha of Puri.

There is a legend that Lord Jagannatha was a deity worshiped by a tribal chief, secretly in a cave. Later this deity was to be interned in a wooden image. There images are buried and new images installed from time to time, but Navi-Padma of Shri Jagannatha is transferred from the old to the new images. It is believed by historians that it contains the tooth of the Buddha. The details of legend told to the tourists are as follows:

The first temple, according to the legend, has been built by King Indradyumna. He felt that there was a concrete presence of the Lord somewhere near about, but he did not know where. He sent four seekers in four directions. One of them, Vidyapati, a young Brahmin, reached a forest and stayed as the guest of tribal chief, Visvavasu. The chief's charming daughter, Lalita, fell in love with him and they got married.

While there, Vidyapati came to know that Visvavasu worshipped some secret deity in a cave. Through Lalita he traced the cave and at once realized that this was the Divine, and escaped to Puri.

Later King Indradyumna apologized to Visvavasu, and obtained his consent for installing the deity in the temple he had built. But the deity was to be interned in a new image, to be carved out of a log that had come floating in the sea. A mysterious old man offered to carve the image. As the image resembled the King's vision, he was allowed to proceed with his work, on the condition that nobody would open the closed room in which he would work before a certain time. But after some days, Gundicha, Indradyumna's queen grew impatient. She pushed open the door. The craftsman disappeared, leaving the three images incomplete in which form they are seen to this day. The images are buried and new images installed at the interval of many years, when the astrological calculations demand it. But the Navi Padma (the lotus shaped navel) of Shri Jagannatha is transferred from the old to the new image. What does this Navi Padma contain? Some

historians believe that it contains the tooth of Buddha.

Evidence of a Text from Sri Lanka

Sri H. L. Kosare has mentioned:

"A Simhalee Buddhist Text from Sri Lanka, *Datha vamsho*, is considered to belong to fourth century A.D. It says 'The ruler of Kalinga was one Guha-shiva. He was the vassal of the Emperor of whole of Bharat and Jambudwipa ruling from Pataliputra. This emperor was the worshiper of Brahmin dharma and arya dharma.' From this it appears that, this reference is of Samudragupta and this king Guha or Guhak was his vassal. The text further mentions that, the Emperor at Pataliputra was complained about this vassal was worshiping the 'dead bones' and abuses the arya devatas. (*datha vamsho*, J.P.T.S. p. 167, verse 72-94). This proves that Buddha's Tooth was being worshipped in Kalinga state, about which a complaint was lodged with Samudragupta." [Kosare H. L.: 1989: 245]

Caste barriers are weak at Jagannatha

It is well known that Buddhists never believed in caste, and those castes, who in Hindu system of Varnas are considered to be very low, are also treated on equal terms by the Buddhists. It is therefore clear, that those places of worship where respect and honour given to low caste people is comparatively better, should be considered as old Buddhist shrines. Such is the case of Temple of Lord Jagannatha of Puri. Catholicity of Lord Jagannatha about caste is well known.

Prof. Ghurey observes:

"The officiating priest of the famous Temple of Jagannatha is a barber, food cooked for the deity by him being acceptable to all but the most orthodox amongst Brahmins..." [Ghurye G. S.: 1969: 27]

J.H. Dave observes:

"Jagannatha is a god of the people. High and low are enjoined to eat here together. In presence of the Lord, all are equal as all barriers of caste, race and faith are transcended. To deny the mahaprasada of the Lord, which is always bloodless, is said to invite the wrath of the despised God." [Dave: 1970: 45]

Dave further observes:

"The temple attendants are divided into 36 orders and 97 classes. The leading one is the Raja of Khurda who calls himself by the lowly title of "sweeper to Jagannatha"..." [Dave: 1970: 46]

Puri is Dantapura

Dave observes:

"There are 24 high festivals during the course of the year. the greatest of them all is, of course, the Car Festival or the Ratha Yatra. Fa Hien's description (5th century A.D.) of the yearly procession of the Buddha's sacred Tooth applies greatly to this procession." [Dave: 1970: 46]

He further confirms that Puri is the same place as Danta Pura. This is what he says.

"Following on the early Hindu period of the worship at Puri, according to Dr. Rajendralal Mitra, there was a Buddhist period which in turn was followed by the period of Krishna or Vishnu worship. The peculiarities of Jagannath worship, its catholicity, its broad basis, its ignoring of caste barriers, and the similarity of the Ratha Yatra or Car Festival with the procession of Buddha's tooth - these and similar other factors tend to support the view that Puri was the same Danatapura where the sacred relic of Buddha's tooth was also situated and preserved. It was taken out every year in a procession with great pomp and devotion and subsequently removed to Ceylon." [Dave: 1970: 43]

Views of Prof. Rao

Lastly, it would be desirable to see what Prof. T.A. Gopinatha Rao has observed a long time back. "...The temple of Jagannatha is believed to have belonged to the Buddhist at one time and to have been converted into a Vishnu Temple at a later date. The image of Jagannatha is an ill-shaped log of wood with two big eyes marked on it rather prominently. Once in twelve years the log is renewed, the log being brought mysteriously from some unknown land. This is utilized for carving a new image of Jagannatha, in which some ancient relic is considered to be embedded. It is the insertion of this relic which sanctifies the new images. This relic

is believed by some to be relic of Buddha..." [Gopinath Rao: 1985: 273]

For those who always wondered as to why the images are ill shaped, this explanation should be enough, as it is not the wooden image but the relic, that is of importance.

Chapter 2 Chapter 4

Chapter 4
Vitthala of Pandharpur is Buddha

Introduction

The deity at Pandharpur, in Western Maharashtra, is called Vitthala, Vithoba or Panduranga. Like the murthi at Tirupati, this murthi is also said to be self manifested. [Keshavdas: p.1] All the relogio-spiritual activity of Maharashtra saint poets of middle ages was centered around this deity. The role of these saint poets in preparing the mental state of Maharashtra of establishing Maratha rule by Shivaji, is universally accepted to be very important. Even today, it is an important deity and is worshiped by all the castes, low and high, and it is the surce of inspiration to a vast sectin of society. A big sect of devotees is called varkari and these people walk down to the shrine from long distances at least once a year for festival.

Deep rooted tradition

That Vithoba of Pandharpur is none else than Buddha is a well rooted tradition in Maharashtra. In our childhood, the book of numbers and alphabets used to have pictures of ten avatars of God, ninth avatara being depicted as Buddha, and the picture of Buddha shown was that of Vithoba of Pandharpur and none of the pictures of Ajanta etc. this shows a great deep rooted feeling in Maharashtra mind that Vithoba is Buddha.

R.C.Dhere [Dhere: 1984: 231] has observed that since the practice of printing panchangas on press was stared, the picture of Vitthala is shown as the ninth avatara of Buddha, with the caption buddha or boudha printed in the bottom. He has such panchangas in his possession. In one of the comparatively recent book shri ram sahastra nam a picture of Vitthala and Rukmini with Garuda and Hanumanta is printed with a caption of 'boudha'. He knows at least two sculptures depicting Vitthala as the buddhaavatara among the ten avatars, one at Genesh temple at Tasgaon in Sangali dist., and second in Mahalakshmi temple at Kolhapur. Image of Buddha avatara in Dasavatras at Rajapur in Ratnagiri dist., though worn out is seen as that of Vitthala.

Dr. Lokhande summarizes

Dr. Bhau Lokhande, in his above quoted work has summarized the literary evidences in a nut shell, showing that all the saints of middle ages considered Vitthala as Buddha and none else. The following is its summary. [Lokhande: 1979: 123]

12th century poet Jaideo has praised Buddha as ninth avatara on the authority of puranas. Marathi saints have considered their principal deity, Vitthala as Buddha only.

Saint Eknatha, while considering Vitthala as Buddha says

"Oh! Vitthala, seeing people madly invloved in wealth and women, you Vitthala have taken the form of Buddha and keeping your hands on waist, and observing silence, station yourself on the brick as the ninth (avatara)."

"...At your door, saints wait for you eternally, but you in great grandeur of Vitthala are standing for Pundalika keeping yourself on brick in the incarnation of Buddha."

Even to saint Tukarama and Namadeva, Vitthala appears in the form of Mouni Buddha (i.e. one who observes silence).

"It is my misfortune that you as Buddha have adopted the vow of silence. As Buddha in name and form, God has become silent in meditation."

Saint Eknatha says to Lord Vitthala that,

"You have manifested yourself on the immorial ksetra of Pandharapur in the form of Buddha seeing that the Dharam has declined and adharma has increased."

Lokhande thinks that, the origin of the word Vitthala as given in the Uttar Khanda of Padma Purana should be considered in the same context. Padma Purana, chapter 35, verse 24 says Vitthala is one who shelters ignorant, downtrodden, criminals and gives them knowledge. Who else was such a great personality other than Buddha and Vitthala, the above derivation of the word Vitthala has got special significance which cannot be denied.

Another important fact is that Lird Buddha gave His first sermon to the Panch Vargiya Bhikkus on the full moon day of Ashadha. This day is called Guru Paurnima and main festival at Pandharpur is celebrated on this day. Also Lord Vitthala wears Yellow Robes called Pitambar. This all fits well with the Buddhist tradition and history.

Views of Dr. Ambedkar

Views of Dr. Ambedkar that Vitthala is none other than Buddha are well known. He had started writing a book on this subject. Unfortunately book could not go beyond a few pages. [Keer:p.501] Even these few pages are not available to us. Whether these pages are still preserved int he unpublished works of Dr. Ambedkar and whether this writing will see the light of the day, only the furture can tell.

Views of Dr. Ambedkar as given by his biographer Dhananjaya Keer are as follows :--

"...Images of Vithoba at Pandharpur is in reality the image of Buddha. I am writing a Thesis on it which will be read at Bharat Sanshodhan Mandal of Pune. Name Panduranga is derived from word pundarika. Pundarika means Lotus and in Pali Lotus is called Panduranga, which means Panduranga is none else but Buddha..." [Keer: p.50]

Views of Kulkarni

The views of Sri. A. R. Kulkarni are also well known and they are given in the Appendix to Dhammapada edited by him. He has reviewed the saint poets' literature and derived conclusions similar to those of Bhau Lokhande. Kulkarni also mentions that there are images of Dhyani Buddha on the stone pillars on the hall of the temple. He further avers that the famous western scholar John Wilson has given evidence that this temple is Buddhist, in his 'Memoris on the Cave Temples.' [Kulkarni: 1978: 129]

Kulkarni points out that the Buddha conquered the enemies by love and non-violence unlike Rama and Krishna who used weapons, and believes that Image has got both hands on waists because of this and quotes the story of Angulimal in its support. Whether one agrees with Kulkarni's views or not, one thing is certain that the image of Panduranga is a fine example of webbed hand, 'a traditional mark of Buddha' and the image depicts a bilateral *Katyavalambita* mudra. The nurthi of his consort is not along with the Lord, and contarary to depiction in modern picutres, consort Rukmini is in another room.

Kulkarni points out that Vitthala is different from Krishan because firstly there is a separate Krishna Temple nearby, secondaly Saint Dnyaneshwara mentions Madhava and Vitthala separately, and thirdly Mahanubhavas who are devotees of Krishna, visit only Krishna temple in Pandharpur and not the temple of Vitthala.

Inscriptinal Evidences

Archaeologically, two inscriptions are mentioned by R. G. Bhandarkar. First is of 1249 A.D., a grant of a village in Belgaum district at Paundarikakshetra, a holy place situated on the Bhimarathi, in vicinity of the God Vishnu, and identifies it as Pandharpur; the second is of 1270 A.D. mentioning of a Aptoryama sacrifice in Pandurangapura, which is another name of Pandharpur, probalbly named after Panduranga. [Bhandarkar: 1982: 122]

It is belived that originator of Varkari cult, which forms the main bulk of present day devotees of Lord of Pandharpur, was Saint Dnyaneshwara who completed his commentary on Gita, 'Dnaneshwari' by 1290 A.D. [Ibid:p.131] *Dynanedeve rachila paya* i.e. Dnyaneshwara laid the foundation, is a popular tradition. Certainly the shrine was present before Dnyaneshwara and bhakti of Panduranga was prevalent then. It is to be noted that inscriptions mention the names Panduranga and Pundarika, which are concerned with Buddhist trditions, a well known Buddhist text is called Sadharma Pundarika, i.e. Lotus of Teachings of Buddha. Obviously name Vitthala came at a later date. Vitthu is said to be Kannada rendering of word 'Vishnu'. This shows that this cult must be Buddhistic before Panduranga was equated with Krishna Vishnu.

Legend was created to connect up names of Pundarika and Vitthala

To establish connection between the names Pundarika and Vitthala the authors of Mahatmya had to do a lot of acrobatics and the faniciful story as mentioned by Bhandarkar is as follows:

"...Pundalika who spent all his time in service of his aged parents and god Krishna was pleased with his devotion to them, ...In the mean time while Krishna was living at Dwaraka, he remembered Radha, ...who ... was living at mountains for practice of austerities... came to know of this through her innate cognitic powers and came at once to Dwaraka and sat on the lap of Krishna. ... Rukmini, the wedded wife of Krishna came to

the place and Radha did not rise up to honour her. ... Rukmini got offended, left Dwaraka and wandered about until she came to Dindiravana and rested there on the site of modern Pandharpur. Krishna was filled with sorrow at the disappearance of Rukmini and went about in quest of her to all parts of the country until he came to the place where Rukmini was lying. After some explanations she was reconciled to him and Krishna then went to the hut of Pundalika to reward him for his devotion to his parents by personal manifestation. Pundalika being engaged in attending to the wants of his father and mother was not able to greet him at once and threw back a brick (Marathi : vit) and asked him to stand on it and wait for him until he finished what he was engaged on. Krishna stood on the brick and there he was joined by Rukmini and thus the shrine of Pandharpur grew up."8

Views of R.C.Dhere

Shri R. C. Dhere in his Marathi monograph "Vithala: ek maha samanvaya" i.e. "Great Syncretization,' (a story of vaishnavization and sanskritization of a god of 'gopa janas' i.e. cow herds of South) has discussed the various aspects. He reviews all the *sthala-puranas*. He is of the opinion that all the panduranga mahatmyas of all the sthal-puranas is an attempt to "Vaishnavize" the god Vitthala. In places where the worshipers of original local deities wanted to preserve the identity of their god, the writers of sthala puranans accepted their claim and attempted to superimpose on it the greatness of Vitthala, thus promoting the process of vaishnavization. (p.42).

He believes that Vithala may be more ancient than Krishna, Vedic or even prevedic. (p.62). He was originally a folk god of cowherds (gopas). He avers that he was a god of dhanagars, a tribal community of the area and has given many tribal folk songs, to prove his point (p.387). He agrees broadly with Dhanpalwar who contemplates a shaivite stage during conversion of Vithala from Buddhism to Vaishnavism. (p.109 ff.)

Giving archeological evidences to show that 'Pandarange' was the original Kannada name of this Vitthala shrine, he avers that all the words like Pandurang, Pandurang kshetra, Pandurangpur, Poundarik kshetra, Pundarik and all such concepts originated from the word 'Pandarange'. He believes that "The origin of word 'Vithala' is not yet satisfactorily explained, and only to explain this name, a story is compiled, depicting the throw of a brick (marathi-vit) by Pundarika', a sankritizised form of "Pandrange" (p.43). He quotes Khare who believes the name Vithala is the name in south Indian Tamil language, denoting hands akimbo i.e hands on the kati, (p.160). He opines that the origin of word 'Vitthala' from 'vit' i.e brick is very artificial and story that Vitthala kept on standing on the brick (vit) is the fable to support it. (p.160). The story of Pundalika, which was accepted by the masses before Dyandeva, is not historical, it is purely mythological. Pundlika is not a son of history but an imaginary hero of devotees' fancy. (p.50)

In addition to saints' verses given above, he mentions more verses including some of Dynandeva and observes that all saints from Dnyandeva to Tukarama call him 'twenty fifth : different from 24 avataras' (verse-68) and Namadeva calls him 'one not seen in a thousands, and not among the twenty fours'. Though only ten avataras are popular, twenty four is the highest limit of Vishnu's incarnations. Vishnu has one thousand names which go by the title of 'Vishnu sahasra naam' but Vitthala is not found in it. (p.52) He is also described as 'naked' 'digambar' by Eknatha, and described as 'a child.' (p.55)

He avers that the first song ever written in any Marathi text is for the praise of Buddha avatara, in Manasollas, a sanskrit text of 1131 A.D. Here the description is of 'maya moha Buddha', like that in Puranas (p.232)

He further observes:

"The description of Buddha incorporated in ten incarnations in Puranas comes with slight difference here and there in various Puranas like, Harivamsha (1.41), Vishnu Puran (3.18), Bhagwat Puran (1.3.24, 2.7,37, 11,4.23), Garud Puran (1.1), Agni Puran (16), Narad Puran (2.72), Ling Puran (2.71), Padma Puran (3.252) etc. Vishnu took this incarnation to deceive the 'daityas' by heretical views, says Vishnu Purana. Harivamsha says, Vishnu took this incarnation in Kikat-desha to confuse the lowly people doing yadnyas by vedic mantras. Garud Puran calls him 'Jin putra'. Bhagwat says, after the start of Kali, to deceive those who hate the devas, a 'jin suta' by name of Buddha will take incarnation in Kikat desha.

"*Kikat* meaning Bihar, the historical birth place of the Buddha, similarly a term 'Saugat', names of places like Sarnath and Mrigdaya, term 'parivrajika' applied to disciple of Buddha, all these are found in the descriptions in Puranas. Vishnu Puran calls him 'mundit' (i.e. tonsured) and 'nagna' (naked). 'Maya-Moha' is a special adjective for him, because he deceives the daityas by his moha. Becoming 'Digambar', he only, taught Jina dharma, and becoming 'raktambar' he advised Buddha dharma. He is also the same as promoter of heretical ideas like Charvaka."

"It makes one sad to see these descriptions in puranas about the Buddha. To call Buddha a maya moha and his teaching to be heretical to divert the demons away from the right path, is a great injustice to the greatness of the Buddha. While converting the Buddha to Vishnu avatara, the puranas have disposed off the teachings of Buddha in such a manner. They accepted the Buddha but completely discarded the Buddha's teachings. In this background a verse in "Meru tantra" is important, which says that the Vipras following left path, Kundaks, Degraded from the caste, having no vedic sanskaras, those becoming 'mlencha' by mistake, the Golaks, the Kayasthas etc. can obtain salvation by taking refuge in Vishnu in Buddha avatara. Jaydev, the poet of 'git govind' also praises the Buddha in the same way. Buddha who despises the yadnyas and shrutis and animal sacrifice is the great ocean of compassion." (p.233)

Knowing well the derogatory remarks of Puranas about the Buddha, why did the saint poets praise the Buddha? he observes:

"We must not forget that, practically nothing gets lost in our tradition, it only changes the name and form. Maharashtra was a land of follower of Buddha for about 1500 years before the Namadeva. There is not one single mountains range where Buddhists have not excavated their caves. In this womb of Sahyadri, the Buddhist bhikshus were eternally chanting 'Buddham shranam gachami' from hundreds of Buddhist caves. The great precepts of 'ahimsa' and 'karuna' were echoed from every particle of marathi land. From princes to artisans, every body was in service of these homeless bhikshus, as seen by numerous epigraphs. To honour these bhikshus, newly born children were christened as 'Bhikoba' and 'Bhikubai' in various town and villages. To think that, this influence of ten fifteen centuries was wiped out just by influence of one vedic intellectual, would be out of place of History. On the contrary, he was abused as "prachanna boudha." Such indelible was this Buddhist influence." (p.234) (This last remark is obviously addressed to Adi Shakaracharya.)

"It is not proper to say that such a powerful religion completely disappeared from the minds of the Marathi masses just by the fall of bhikkus or by the origin of new influential cults in the land. The stream of universal love and karuna which was spread by Dynandeva and Tukaram in Maharashtra, was originated by the innumerable bhikkus from the influence of Buddha's teachings of Karuna. This fact can not be easily forgotten. The Buddhist society of pre- Dnyandeva period is not seen clearly as 'Buddhists'. Even then, it has to be presumed that it merged with some other popular cult"

"Buddha's religion, which flourished in this land for ten fifteen centuries, emptied its pot of karuna here while departing in twelfth thirteenth century, and the saint poets mixed their various streams of bhakti in this main stream to maintain it as a strong flowing current. Even the perversions coming in the form of tantrism were discarded in Maharashtra by the Buddhism which came now came in the form of Bhagawat dharm. Even in this new form it did not stop criticizing the Vedas. But its label of non-vedic disappeared. This religion of saint poets is a new incarnation of Buddhism, in the cultural life of Maharashtra, this is the 'mahan yugantra' - The great change of Era." (p.235)

Chapter 3 Chapter 5

Chapter 5
Lord Ayyappa is Buddhist

In addition to Temple at Puri, Pandharpur, and Badrinath in three different corners of India, even the extreme south, viz. Kerala, was also under the influence of Buddhism and among others, the famous deity Lord Ayyappa was originally a Buddhist shrine.

Buddhism prospered in ancient Kerala

K.R. Vaidyanathan observes:

"Like Jainism, Buddhism also held sway in ancient Kerala during the reign of Asoka in the 3rd century B.C. Coming by sea, Buddhism was popular in coastal districts, Karumati, Mavelikkara, Bharanikkavu, Pallikkal, Karunagappalli, Idappalli, Dharmapattabnam, Matayi and Pallikkunny being its chief centers... Many prominent Hindu Temples of today like the Vadakkunnathan temple, Trichur and the Kurumga Bhagwati Temple, Kondugallur, and **even the famous Ayyappa shrine atop Sabarimala are believed to have been at one time Buddhist shrines.** ... While Jainism did hardly leave any impress on Kerala society, Buddhism was absorbed in Hinduism in respect of some of its ceremonies and forms of worship. The images, processions and utsavam, etc. associated with popular worship in present day Hindu temples in Kerala are said to be a legacy of Buddhism. **Even the chakiyar kuttu conducted in temples is said to be an adaptation of the Buddhist monk's religious expositions."** [Vaidyanathan: 1982: 4]

Ayyappa is Dharma Sasta

Coming specifically to Lord Ayyappa, it would be interesting to know that Lord Ayyappa is also generally, and popularly known as Dharma Sasta. Vaidyanathan observes:

"There are temples dedicated to Dharma Sasta as Ayyappa is generally known all over the State of Kerala - and now of course, in other states also. Even in temples dedicated to other deities in Kerala there will be generally a Sasta shrine. ..." [Vaidyanathan: 1982: 70]

As is well known that word 'Dharma' is deeply rooted in Buddhist literature. Eg. 'sadhamma' as meaning Teachings of Buddha. Sasta is a well known epithet applied to Buddha. Even today Buddha is referred to as Sasta in daily prayer of Buddhists, e.g. ' Sattha dev manussanam '. Amarkosha mentions this as one of the names of Buddha. It appears that though the nature of deity changed, the name still persists. The present nature of the Lord is considered to be a son of Siva on Vishnu. Vaidyanathan observes:

"The story is that, Siva was captivated by the charms of Mohini in which form Vishnu appeared at the time of churning of the Ocean of Milk in order to entice the asuras so that the devas could divide the nectar among themselves. Siva succumbed to the beauty of Mohini and Sasta is believed to have been born out of the union." [Vaidyanathan: 1982: 71]

Caste barriers are weak

Another notable feature is the caste barriers are comparatively weak in this temple, which is a common feature of all those shrines which were previously of Buddhist faith. This became necessary for the Brahmins to concede to, so that masses could be wooed away from Buddhism. Vaidyanathan observes:

"...the temple doors of Sabarimala are open to all, irrespective of caste, creed, religion and social status. Here the high and low, the rich and poor, meet on equal terms; all are alike - Ayyappas as the devotees are called after the deity itself." [Vaidyanathan: 1982: 75]

The pilgrimage to Sabari, in itself thought to be an act of tremendous virtue by the Ayyappas, involves a lot of austerities to be followed by them. It is well known that there are 18 steps that are to be climbed only by those who observe these austerities. But it is little known that these austerities are similar to the vows, known as ashta-shilas, taken by Buddhists. This point should also demonstrate how the traditions persist though the labels change.

Early Hindu literature has no mention of Ayyappa

About references in ancient literature, T.A.Gopinath Rao observes: [Gopinath Rao: 1985: 486]

"This deity which is very peculiar to the Dravida country does not appear to have been known to the region north of Godavari. In no early Sanskrit work is the deity mentioned. Even the dictionaries do not record this

name and give its origin..."

In the Vishnu Purana, we hear about Mohini, but

"...It is in the Shri Bhagwata that we learn for the first time that Hara fell in love with Vishnu in his form of Mohini. From the union between Hara and Hari, Arya, Shasta or Hariharputra is said to have been born..."

"...The Suprabhedagama very distinctly mentions that Sasta was distributing the ?amrita? among the gods when it was churned from the milk ocean, by the union with her of Hara..."

Ayyappa is a Deity of lower castes

Shri Rao further observes:

"...That this deity is peculiarly Dravidian and has been taken into fold of the Aryan pantheon at a later period goes without contradiction. At present Hariharputra is treated in the Tamil country as a village deity **and is mostly worshiped by the lower classes and the puja in the temple of Hariharputra of Ayyanar (or Ayyanarappan) is performed by a Shudra. The Padmasamhita states that the puja in the temple of Arya should be performed by the Parashava; We know from other sources that a Parashava is an *anuloma* born of a Brahmana father and a Shudra mother. But somehow Ayyanar, like the more tamasic form of Devi, such as Kali, which are worshiped by lower classes in Tamil country, is made puja to by the Brahmanas in Malabar.**"

Ayyappa was Buddhist

About the origin of the name Shasta, Shri Rao has to say:

"This deity is called Shasta because he is able to control and rule over the whole world; etymologically therefore, the word means a ruler of a country; and is sometimes applied to teachers and fathers. **The Amarkosha applies the name to Buddha also.** The Tamil Nighantus call him by the additional names Satavahana, the rider of the white elephant, kari, the wielder of the weapon known as sendu, the consort of purana and pushkala, the protector of Dharma and Yogi; they also state that the vehicle of Sasta is the elephant and the crest of his banner a cock. **The names rider of the white elephant, Yogi, protector of Dharma coupled with the significance of Buddha applied to Sasta in the Amarkosha incline one to conclude that Buddha as conceived and worshiped in the Tamil country was ultimately included in the Hindu pantheon and a Puranic story invented for his origin at a later period** of the history of Hindu Iconology..." [Gopinath Rao: 1985: 487]

Ayyappa has weapons of Bodhisattva

Rao gives description of image as per texts, The Amshumabhedagama, Suprabhedegama and Karanangama, notable among the description is that Lord is seated on a pitha..." with his left leg hanging down the seat and the right one folded and rested upon the seat vertically. On the knee of this latter leg should rest the elbow of the stretched left arm. In the right hand there should be a vajradanda, which is crooked stick **(note the vajra a characteristic weapon of the Boudha Bodhisattva)**..."

Buddha is worshipped in many forms

Lastly we may quote the opinions of Thiru. N. Vanamalai

"Though Buddhism disappeared from Tamilnadu, it became Tamil by integrating into Tamil. Buddha had become reincarnation of Tirumal. The worship of Sathanar, Ayyanar, Dharma Raja and Bodhi Raj are old Buddha worship." [Arachi: 1969: 160]

Chapter 4 Chapter 6

Chapter 6
Draksharama is Buddhist

Draksharama is situated at a distance of 4 miles from Ramachandrapuram which is a taluk head-quarter in East Godavari district of Andhra... The place is very famous as a seat of a temple of Bhimeswaraswami [Ramesan N., *Temples and Legends of Andhra*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, p. 112] The epigraphy on the walls of the temples is perhaps the richest amongst all the temples of Andhra..." [Ibid. p.11]

Story of Daksha Prajapati

About the origin of name, Ramesan observes:

"The name Drakshrama is said to be a corrupted form of 'Daksha' 'arama' or the garden of Daksha-prajapathi..."

"...Daksha Arama or the modern Draksharama, is said to be the seat of this famous Yajna of Dakshaprajapathi, and in memory of it, even today, **orthodox Brahmins do not perform any Yajna or such ceremonies, within the premises of Drakshrama.** [Ibid. 113]

This seems to be far fetched. The word should means a garden of grapes. Be it as it may, the fact remains that word arama is a well known Buddhist word applied to abodes of Buddhist bhikshu.

As a matter of fact the story of *yajna* of Daksha Prajapati is told about many shrines all over the length and breadth of the country and not only about Draksharama. Also it has many versions. And hence there is nothing historical about it, but it denotes the trend of people of those times. Dr. Ambedkar gives details of story in many places. One version of the story is as follows: [Ambedkar: 1987: *Riddles in Hinduism*, vol.4,163]

"... Who is this Shiva whom the Brahmins adopted as their God in preference to Indra? The story of Daksha Prajapati's Yajna and the part played by Shiva throws great light on Shiva. The story is that somewhere in the Himalayas king Daksha was performing an Yajna. This Yajna was attended by all Devas, Danavas, Pishachas, Nagas, Rakshasas and Rishis. But Shiva absented as Daksha did not give him invitations. Dadhichi one of the Rishis scolded Daksha for his failure to invite Shiva and to perform his puja. Daksha refused to call Shiva and said "I have seen many of your Rudras. Go away, I don't recognize your Shiva." Dadhichi replied " You have all conspired against Shiva, take care, your Yajna will never reach a successful finis." Mahadeo coming to know of this created a Rakshas from his mouth and this Rakshas destroyed the Yajna started by Daksha. This shows that there was a time when Brahmins refused to recognize Shiva as the God to be worshipped or it shows that Shiva was against the Yajna system of the Brahmanas."

"The difference between the Aryans and the Non-Aryans was cultural and not racial. The cultural difference centred round two points. The Aryans believed in Chaturvarna. The Non-Aryans were opposed to it. The Aryans believed in the performance of Yajna as the essence of their religion. The Non-Aryans were opposed to Yajna. Examining the story of Daksha's Yajna in the light of these facts it is quite obvious that Shiva was a Non-Vedic and a Non-Aryan God. The question is why did the Brahmins, the pillars of Vedic culture, adopt Shiva as their God?"

Thus anti-Yajna and anti-chaturvarna spirit is shown by this story. As Saivism had already become a part of Hinduism by the time this centre came up, the association of this story with this place should be considered as an allusion of it being a Buddhist site, as Brahmins are known to shun the Buddhist places, and that may be the reason of origin of the legend of Daksha-Prajapathi.

This place is also sacred to Muslims.

Ramesan observes:

"...There is a tomb in Draksharama of a Muslim saint by name Saiyid Shah Bhaji Aulia with a mosque attached to it. This muslim saint is said to have lived 500 years ago. He was born according to tradition, at Gardex near Madina in Arabia, and came to Draksharama with his disciples during the course of his tours. Being hungry, they slaughtered the temple bull of a Saivite mutt at Drakshrama and ate it. In the dispute that ensued, the relative greatness of the saint and the local Saivite head of the mutt has called into question, and to settle the matter, a Sivalilngam was thrown into the pond, by name *Lingala Cheruvu*, and both the Muslim saint and the Saivite Mathadhipathi were asked to bring back the Linga by the power of their worship. The Muslim saint, it appears, prayed to the infinite Lord who is the same for all, irrespective of all difference, and the Lord being pleased with the depth of his devotion acceded to his request. The Muslim

saint who won in the contest was then given the mutt to live in, and he converted it into a sacred mosque. The descendants of this saint are said to be still living in Draksharama". [Ibid. p118]

Miracles apart, the gist of the legend shows that the masses around the area supported the Muslim saint. As is well known, the supporters of these Muslim saints were people of lower castes, who of course, were originally Buddhists. Hence, it stands to reason that in olden times, the area was predominantly Buddhist.

Archaeological Evidence of it being a Buddhist Shrine

However, Ramesan gives what he calls 'a legend' in support of this. As a matter of fact, this is no mere legend but a statement of scientific, archaeological facts:

"The third legend about this temple is that the temple was originally a Buddha Chaitya and that during the course of revival of Hindu worship, it was converted into a Hindu temple. The Mula Virat or the Linga is said to be one of the *Ayaka Stambhas* of the original Buddha Chaitya. Chaityas or Stupas in Buddhists methods of worship, are mounds raised over the corporeal relics of Lord Buddha or a great Acharya. Buddhist Stupas and Chaityas are spread all over India, but one of the main characteristics of the Andhra type of Chaityas and Stupas is the existence of the five vertical pillars, called the Ayaka Stambhas, which are erected in the four cardinal directions viz. East, South, West and North. In all the Chaityas of Andhra, this is a peculiar characteristic which is found. **These Ayaka Stambhas which are five in number, are said to represent the five major incidents in the life of Lord Buddha** viz, Janana or Birth, Mahabhiniskramana or the great renunciation, Samyak-Sambhodi of the prefect realization. Dharma Chakra Pravarthana or the setting in motion of the wheel of Dharma, and Mahaparinirvana or the final absorption of Lord Buddha into the Infinite. The Ayaka Stambhas are generally vertical pillars made of white marble stone." [Ibid. p.114]

Amaravati and other centres converted

He further continues:

"Andhra Desa and especially the Krishna river basin has been a famous seat of Buddhism, and many stupas have been found in this valley as for example at Amaravathi, Goli, Jaggayyapeta, Gantasala etc., not to speak of the Mahachaitya at Nagarjunakonda. During the period of the revival of Hindu worship. For example, **in the Garbha Griha of the Amareswara temple of Amravathi in Guntur district, there is a typical white marble lotus medallion slab of the Buddhist type. The peculiar characteristic Buddhist type of bricks are also found in the temple. It is therefore possible that the Buddhist Chaitya and the Ayaka Stambhas have been reconverted into a Hindu temple and adapted for linga worship.** There is nothing irregular about this, since in whatever form one worships the Lord, the place still retains its greatness". [Ibid. p.114]

Without joining issues on the last statement, however, it might be pertinent to ask, whether it would be proper to worship the Lord Bhimeswaraswami by *Trisaran and Pancha Sheela* if a devotee so desires.

Very many shrines were Buddhist

It is also proper to quote another legend which gives correlation between various shrines:

"There is yet another popular legend about the origin of this temple. In this temple, Lord Shiva is worshipped in Lingakara. The shape of the Mula Virat, is a long cylindrical pillar some 20 or 25 feet high. The legend is, that these are parts of an original linga which broke off into 5 pieces and fell at **five different places or Aramas viz. Bheemarama in West Godavari, Amararam of Amravati in Guntur, Daksharama or Draksharama in East Godavari and Kurmarama which is Lotipalli in East Godavari District..."** [Ibid. p. 113]

This legend connects the various place. Some of them have been already shown to be Buddhist in origin. Because of this connections, it may be presumed that all these places were originally Buddhist.

Ayaka Stambhas were converted into Siva lingas

Dr. I. K. Sarma, while discussing various sites in Andhra Desa, observes:

"...The Mauryan conquest of coastal Andhra was, therefore, probably earlier to Asokan accession and the Religion of Buddha came to Andhra almost certainly in the pre-Mauryan age. It is of great importance that Asoka in his IVth pillar edict defines the duties of such *rajukas* in the administration. We have seen above how Amravati - Dharanikota grew with a Buddhist base right from a Pre- Mauryan period. This very place

came to be regarded as an aramaksetra with the Amareswara Linga as the presiding deity of the Sthala. The toponym Amaravati itself is regarded as a corrupt from of "Aramavati". It is not without significance that the long east coast covered by Godavari- Krishna deltas, located mid-way between the Magadha (the home of Buddhism) and Ceylon (the strong-hold of Buddhism) developed aramakshetras. We have known at least five such aramas. These are **Draksharma** and **Kurmarama,** both in East Godavari district; **Somarama** and **Ksirarama**, in west Godavari district and **Amararama** in Guntur district. In each of these places a vast temple complex for Siva was raised by Bhima-I (812-921 A.D.) the Eastern Chalulkyan monarch. An unusually tall Linga was consecrated in the Sanctum which is double storied Sarvatobhadrika shrine. Several *angalyas*, tall *prakara* walls with *dalans* were added by the successive rulers. **An examination of such a Linga within the Amaresavra temple, Amaravati itself has revealed that the upper most part of the Linga, which is nearly six meter high, has a square mortise hole although rounded off and in the remaining four places too (also Adikesvara temple, Chebrolu Guntur district, the Linga within the main sanctum was similarly tall and of Palnad lime stone. There is no doubt that a Buddhist pillar (*ayaka or mandapa Khambha*) was shaped to a linga in all these cases."** [Sarma: 1988: 9]

Affinity of Magadha towards coastal Andhra

He further observes:

"...We may now recall to mind certain important Aramas of Buddhist fame. **Veluvanarama** and **Jivakarama** (Rajagruha); **Ambapalivanaarama** (Vaisali), **Jetavanarama** (Sravasti), **Goshitarama, Kukkutarama** and **Pavarr-arama** (Kausambi) etc. All these belong to rich merchants. They were famed right from Buddha's time and nurtured the growth of Buddhism. At the Amaravati Mahacaitya a unique sculptured Steele depicted these aramas with full architectural detail and each frame ... was duly labeled also in early Brahmi characters of 3rd century B.C. **No where else in Buddhist art we have such well dated sculptured scenes.** All these facts emphasize the close affinity and the firm hold of the Magadhan Buddhism on the coastal Andhradesa with Amaravati- Dharanikota as its nucleus." [Sarma: 1988: 10]

Chapter 5 Chapter 7

Chapter 7
Srisailam is Buddhist

Srisailam is situated in the thick and inaccessible forests of the Nallamalai Hills, and is famous as Srisaila. The sanctity of this place is claimed both by the Hindus as well as by the Buddhists..." [Ramesan, *Temples and Legends of Andhra*, p.11]

It was temple of tribals

There is a legend about a cow giving all its milk on a stone, which was latter enshrined in a temple by divine order. [Ibid. p.11] Similar legends are attached to many other temples, including Tirupati.

"There is another legend concerning the origin of this temple, among the tribal population called Chenchus, who live in this part of the hills. According to this legend prevalent among the Chenchu tribes. Lord Siva came once to Srisailam on hunting expedition, and fell in love with a beautiful Chenchu woman, whom he married, and who used to accompany him in his hunting expeditions to the neighbouring forests. **Hence even today Lord Mallikarjuna is known among these tribes as "Chenchu Malliah".** This tribal legend is beautifully borne out by an interesting bas-relief on the *prakara* of the temple, in which a tiger is shown as being killed by Lord Siva with a trident. In this Lord is shown as being followed by Parvati dressed as a forest woman with arrows and four dogs. It is interesting to note that **the Chenchus have free permission, even today, to go into any part of the temple, including the Garbha Griha, enshrining the sacred linga.** It is in fact, these tribal people that help to drag the car in the big **Ratha festival** of the temple and also at other minor services within the temple. During the great Sivaratri festival, when thousands of people congregate here, to bathe in the sacred waters of the Patalganga and worship Lord Mallikarjuna, **the Chenchus also go and worship inside the Garbha Griha independent of all the priests.** To this day, caste, creed or sex, does not prohibit any one, providing he or she is a Hindu, form doing Abhiseka to the Lord from the waters of Patalganga or to do Archana with flowers directly. Such a catholic form of worship is unknown anywhere else in Andhra, except at Srisailam, and this custom probably dates back to the Buddhist period when caste rules were not so rigid.

"Srisailam may be traced back to the Buddhist period and perhaps even earlier than to the Mahayana school of Buddhism which is known to have flourished during the first century A. D. The Buddhist pilgrims, Fa Hain and Hiuen Tsang have made references to the Sriparvatha hill which is in the Nagarjunakonda valley of the same river Krishna. **After the decline of Buddhism, the Hindu religion would appear to have re-established its authority, probably due to the efforts of Adi Samkara and Srisailam which is a seat of Hinduism, is now counted as one of the sacred Khsetras with an important seat for Sakti in the name of Madhavi which later on came to be called as Bhramarambha.** Srisailam is also a principal seat of the Jangams and is one of the five main mathas of the Veera Shaivas. ..." [Ibid., p.14]

"**Here lithic records, preserved in the temple, however, do not take us back earlier than the 14th century A.D...**" [Ibid., 16]

"The main festivals of the temple last from February to the end of May and **during this period, the temple is under the management of Pushpagiri Math of Cuddapah district,** whereas on the other days the management is left to a Jangam priest assisted by the local Chenchus. ...The Chenchus take a leading part in the festivals both before and after Sivarathri...." [Ibid., p.17]

"...The main temple of Lord Mallikarjuna stands in the centre of this inner courtyard and is surrounded by a number of minor shrines. The temple of Bhramarambha or the Amman temple as it is popularly known is in a separate enclosure west of the inner courtyard." [Ibid., p.18]

"...On the northern side of the temple under the shade of a Vat Vriksha is another shrine dedicated to Mallikarjuna, and local legend say that this shrine contains the original linga over which the black cow of princess Chandravati gave its milk." [Ibid., p.18]

One of the bas reliefs show a Kiratarjunaiya scene and here....

"... The bas - relief shows entire sequence of story, and it is interesting to note that Parvati is, in this bas - relief dressed as a Chenchu woman." [Ibid. p.18]

Huen Tsang informs us that Buddhist scholar Nagarjuna was staying here. [*Lokmat*, 27.2.97]

Tribals were Buddhists

All this information is sufficient to link up the temple with the tribal population. The important point to note is that all these tribals belonged to the Buddhist faith. The mere fact that these shrines had to be destroyed with sword and fire for establishing Brahmin supremacy over Buddhism, gives ample evidence that these tribal people practiced the Buddhist faith and the shrines were their centers not only of worship but also of life. All the activities of tribal folks used to be centered around the temple. That is the reason why these places had to be destroyed if Brahmin supremacy had to prevail at any time. **The relation of the tribals with the Buddhist faith is the crucial point that is missed unfortunately by Indian scholars, though some of the westerners have mentioned. This holds true for almost all areas, and specially for South India.** You may name any temple, any shrine that is subjected to Brahmanic iconoclasm, it would be closely related to Buddhist faith, and belong to the tribals. The relation between Buddhism and the tribal races seems to be great and significant. We would see later that Tirupati is no exception to this.

Nagarjunakonda and Srisailam were destroyed and acquired for Brahmanic use

Now we would concentrate on Srisailam and observe what the scholars have to say about Nagarjunkonada, as well as Srisailam. Prof. Bhagvan on the authority of Longhurst has observed as follows:

"... Under his (Sankara's) very supervision, the Buddhist, their statues and monument at Nagarjunakonda were destroyed. A.H.Longhurst, who conducted excavations at Nagarjunkonda, has recorded it in his invaluable book: 'Memoir of the Archaeological Survey of India' No.54, The Buddhist Antiquities of Nagarjunkonda, by A.H.Longhurst, Delhi, 1938, p.6.

"**The ruthless manner in which all the buildings at Nagarjunakonda have been destroyed is simply appalling and cannot represent the work of treasure seekers alone as so many of the pillars, statues, and sculptures have been wantonly smashed to pieces.** Had there been a town close at hand a Amaravati, one can understand the site being used as a quarry by modern builders as was so often done in India. But this never occurred at Nagarjunakonda as there are no towns and no cart roads in or out of the valley. Local tradition relates that the great Hindu philosopher and teacher Shankaracharya of medieval times came to Nagarjunakonda with a host of followers and destroyed the Buddhist monument. Be this as it may, the fact remains that the **cultivated lands in the valley on which ruined buildings stand represent a religious grant made to Shankaracharya** and it was only with the sanction of the present religious Head of the followers of the great teacher that I was to conduct the excavations. This same Brahmin pontiff, who resides at Pushpagiri in the Guntur District, **also owns the Srisailam temple in the Nallamalais, which no doubt was acquired in the same manner as it seems to have been a Buddhist site originally."**
[Bhagwan K.S.: 1986: 14]

Apart from the manner of capturing the Buddhist sites by Shankaracharya, the narration of Longhurst gives an evidence of Srisailam originally being a Buddhist shrine, and that it was acquired for Brahmanical use, though the original rights of the tribals had to be conceded, and the tribals in the changed circumstances had to be satisfied with the portrayal of Parvati as a tribal women. It would be remembered that even the Brahmanic literature had to depict Parvati as a tribal women has become the subject matter of many a dance drama scenes. The Chenchus are known to be the poorest tribals of the lot. But they have not given up their rights of Ratha Yatra, which we will see later (chapter 27), is a relic of Buddhist tradition. It is also worth noting that during the most profitable period the temple is in charge of outsiders, and during rest of the year, it is left in charge of locals. One would find such arrangements in many other places. Why? Does this need any comment?

Chapter 6 Chapter 8

Chapter 8
Traditional Story of Lord of Tirumalai

Legends concerning the Hill

Many Puranas contain references to Tirumalai, the important ones being Varaha Purana and Bhavishyotar Purana. In short the story is as follows:

"Legends dealing with the sanctity of the Hill are distinct from those which deal with the sojourn of Vishnu from Srivaikuntham..." [Raghavacharya: I,30]

These stories give the explanation why the hill has various names like Vrishabhachala, Anjanachala, Sheshahala, Venkatachala etc. Though it is obvious that name Venkatachala is derived from old name Vengadam, the *Mahatyams* are keen on narrating the story that name Venkatachala is given because the sins incurred by a brahmin living with a chandala woman of bad reputation were burnt here.

"But great Sanskrit scholars have not even to this day been able to derive this meaning etymologically for the word Venkata..." [Ibid., 32]

Legends of Self Manifestation of Murthi

Sitapati Observes:

"...Lord Srinivas manifested himself in a celestial Vimanam on the Swami Pushkarni located on the Lord's Kridadri or Seshachalam and that this Kridadri or Venkatachalam was specially brought down to earth from Sri Vaikuntam, the Lord's abode. The manifestation was in the yuga of the Sweta Varaha Kalpa. In this age Brahma was the first to worship the Lord then became an idol assuming the *archavatara in Kaliyuga.* This idol was discovered in an ant-hill by one Tondaiman with the assistance of one Rangadasa and was first worshipped by the Sage Vaikhanasa..." Sitapati:15]

Sage Bhrigu kicks Vishnu on chest

Why Lord came to earth is explained in the following story which is condensed from P.M.Munniswamy Chetty's Mahatyam.

Sage Bhrigu, in order to find our who was the proper god to receive *Yagnaphalam*, went to Brahma and Siva and thought both to be unfit. Then he went to Vishnu and kicked the Lord on the chest, and instead of punishing the sage, Vishnu inquired of him if the feet of best among the twice born were hurt. Bhrigu declared Vishnu as a proper god for *yagnaphalam*. But Lakshmi was annoyed and left for earth, and Lord followed in search of her, and remained in as ant-hill under a tamarind tree on the banks of Holy Pushkarni. After thousand years, during the Chola rule Brahma and Rudra as cow and calf arrived to feed the Lord. Chola king was cursed by Lord as the Lord was hurt by a stick thrown by the cowherd at the cow. However he was assured release from curse and that he would be reborn as Akasa raja and give his daughter in marriage in the Lord, and also present a gold studded crown.

Venkatesvara as a tribal youth falls in love with Padmavati

Later when Akasa Raja was ruling the Tondamandalam, he found a lotus with a baby girl in it, during ploughing. The child, named Padmavati, grew into a beautiful damsel and met one day Lord Srinivasa, as a *kirata* hunter youth. Lord Srinivasa fell in love with her and expressed his desire for marriage. Through the mediation of his mother Vakula devi, marriage was arranged. Lakshmi who was in Karavirapuram arrived on receiving the information and was happy to know that Padmavati was none other than Vedavati who was taken by Ravana instead of Sita. The marriage was solemnized with great pomp and grandeur with the money borrowed from Kubera on the understanding that debt would by repaid in thousand years. Akasa Raja presented the crown and gods showered flowers on the couple.

Why Venkatesvara has no weapons

Some years after the marriage, Akasa raja died, and his son Vasudana ascended the throne, But he did not understand the rightful place of his uncle Tondaman, and on the issue of sharing the kingdom, war ensued between them. **Srinivasa gave away His chakra and sankha to Tondaman** and joined in person to fight for Vasudana. Ferocious war broke out. At one stage chakra was sent against Lord Himself and Lord fell down unconscious and war stopped. There was truce and kingdom was partitioned between the two. After settling the dispute thus, Srinivasa went to Agastya ashram. One day Lord asked Tondaman to build a

temple for Him, and King Tondaman built the Temple.

Above is the popular story. But Brahmanda Purana does not mention any war between Vasudana and Tondaman. It says that once the enemies of Tondaman waged war against him. Tondaman rushed to the temple via a tunnel and prayed. **Lord appeared before him and gave him His chakra and sankha. Tondaman won the war and while returning the weapons begged the Lord to wear them invisibly,** so that the world may remember the great help rendered by Him to a devotee. The Lord agreed and from that day weapons were invisible till Ramanuja prayed to the Lord and begged Him to wear them visible for "men disputed about His identity in ignorance."

Time of start of Cult of Tirupati

It has been claimed that this Raja Tondaman, who is said to have built the temple for the Lord, was a historical person and his time was:

"...in kaliyuga when the yuga had advanced sufficiently to have given occasion to the institution of the era which now- a-days goes by the name of Vikramaditya, and say definitely that the other era known to the Hindus, that of the Saka had not yet come into existence. This would mean a period of time between 57 or 58 B.C..and 78 A.D..." [Aiyangar: I,22]

Somebody had to be there to start the cult of Tirupati, and the king who did, was named by Puranas as Tondaman, which name represents more a people than an individual. But his times around the beginning of Christian era and presumption that cult of Tirupati started around this time can only mean worship of some relic and not installation of Murthi; we will discuss this in detail in later chapters.

Chapter 7 Chapter 8

Chapter 9
Self Manifested Murthi

Belief in self manifestation obscures history

It is a great paradox that in this country a lot many people are made to believe that murthis can be self manifested, i.e. murthis are making their presence without being made by the human hand.

It is not only the illiterate masses, who believe in this but also the most educated and the learned do. Such is the mentality that has been purposefully created by the few elites of this land. It does not only remain a harmless superstition on personal level but is used by these clever people to obscure any inquiry, any kind of intelligent interchange of ideas. It is understandable if a devotee believes in this but for a student of history it is of no use. Unfortunately, the scholars dealing with the subject of Tirupati have taken refuge under this theory of self manifestation to explain away the historical fact, such as:

*. 1.Why one need not discuss the attributes of Murthi

*. 2.Why there are no parivar devatas. Why it is the only ek-devata temple in whole of India.

*. 3.Why the murthi does not conform to the Agamic rules.

*. 4.Why there was no regular worship in this Temple, till 966 A.D.

*. 5.Why the various murthis are not recognized in this temple by their Agamic names.

and many such points which are inconvenient for Brahmnic scholars to answer, are tried to by solved by the panacea of 'self manifestation'. For example T.K.T.Vira Raghavacharya, while refuting the theories of Shri Srinivasa Rao who had challenged the Vaishnavite creed of the temple, explains away the absence of *updevatas* as follows:

"...As for connection which Kapila and Bhrigu are said to have had, it may be stated that Kapila, Bhrigu, Ganesa, Durga, Siva and Brahma are all Updevatas in a temple consecrated to Vishnu according to both the Vaishnavite Agamas. But they never had a place in Tirumalai for the simple reason that Sri Venkateswara is *svayamvyakta murti* and not consecrated according to Agamas..." [Raghavacharya: I, 300]

These stories of self manifestation are constructed by the learned few and are incorporated in daily rituals,for ignorant many.Several sthala puranas and stories are compiled for this purpose, and incorporated in various Puranas. The purpose of these stories was not only to attach the divine importance to the shrine but also to explain to ignorant masses how they happened to come across a new image overnight. Historically speaking, it only means that the person who wrote the sthalapurana either does not really know who manufactured the murthi or does not really know who manufactured the murthi or does not want to mention it because of his vested interests, even if he knows. In plain language it existed before the sthala puranas were compiled.

R.C.Dhere rightly avers that any image with attributes, features or weapons can never be 'self manifested', it is always sculptured. Any attempt to say so by the so called research scholars and priests on the verdict of saint poets, should only be considered as preservation of their selfish interests. [Dhere: 1984: 150]

Usurped Buddhist Murthis are labeled as 'Self manifested'

In context of Lord of Tirumalai, 'Self manifested' should only mean that the murthi existed. It was there. It was abandoned by its devotees or there were no devotees left to care for it. It was uncared for, it was unworshiped, it was friendless, it was lying in a state of bad preservation for a length of time, such a length of time that it got buried in an ant hill. When it was found by one shudra Rangadasa, it was resurrected, and its worship started. Then the quarrel ensued for its ownership, each of the two main religions Vaishnavism and Saivism, claiming the ownership. Were they so depressed by any of the enemies form outside or from inside that they could not dare to look after their beloved idol? Devotees of either Siva or Vishnu or any other Brahmnical sect never had any such misfortune and calamity, except in times of Muslim invasion, It was only then, that Brahamnic idols had to be guarded, concealed and protected from the iron and fire of Muslim hand. Before the Muslim onslaught Brahmin murthis were never in a state of such humiliating and deplorable conditions. The people of various sects quarreled among themselves but never annihilated others to the extent that nobody remained there even to light a lamp in the temple. Before the Muslims came, Buddhists were the only enemies of the brahmins. But none of the Buddhist kings was so intolerant to Brahmnical images so as to let it suffer such a fate. Then why this image of Lord of Tirumalai was lying

uncared for, for such a long time, if it was an image of any Brahmnical deity?

On the contrary, there is a definite historical evidence that Brahmnical kings persecuted the Buddhists and Buddhists had to abandon their shrines, with the result that no bhikshus were left to look after their viharas, Hiuen Tsang has given many examples where the local deities protected themselves. L.M.Joshi has observed:

"Although Buddhism in South India during the 7th and the 8th centuries had ceased to receive royal patronage, since the Pallavas and their rival dynasties were followers of Brahmnical religion, yet it continued to face the rising opposition from Jainism and Saivism." [L.M.Joshi: 1977: 38]

"In Dhanyakataka or Dharanikota on the Krishna, many Buddhist monasteries were not in ruins when Hsuan-tsang visited the province. Still about 20 of them were occupied by about 1,000 Mahasanghika monks. The famous Purvasaila and Avarasails monasteries near the capital city (modern Bezwada) as also Amaravati, were still extant, but without any monks. In the time of Hsuan-tsang only 'the local deities guarded the monasteries.'" [L.M.Joshi: 1977: 38]

Thus in Buddhist monasteries, the images were left uncared for, for the simple reason that there were no people to go about worshiping the Buddha, to such an extent that the caves of Ajanta which were unparalleled in the world in aesthetic were forgotten for a pretty long time and not one bhikku or a lay Buddhist remained there to narrate to glory the Buddhism was. Thus the memory of Buddha was gradually wiped out from the minds of people.

Device of 'Pandavas'

In addition to this device of so called 'self manifestation', Brahmins have resorted to use another device to appropriate Buddhist shrines, temples, mathas and viharas. That is 'Pandavas' device. Any cave , any old temple, any old structure which is found deserted, Brahmins have christened it, rather crudely, in the name of Pandavas. Surprisingly millions of god loving, god fearing, ignorant gullible masses have believed this, just ignoring the fact that the Pandavas, either singly or collectively, were never the subject matter of worship. Such structures are scattered all over the country. Even for the great 'Seven Pagodas' or so called 'Rathas' of Mahabalipuram, which definitely deserved a better treatment, it is a pity, that Brahmins could not find a better nomenclature than that of Pandavas.

Dr. Ambedkar had very aptly said:

"The people with selfish motives say that the caves in Maharashtra are Pandava caves. What for did the Pandavas come here? Pandavas never went more than 80 miles away from Delhi. How did they dig up fifteen hundred caves in Alwar state? They neither had a pick or a spade." [Ambedkar's speech at Pune., "Janata", 1.1.55, Ganjare's vol.VI, p. 121]

Device of 'Rakshasas'

It was told to masses that a certain temple or the other was built by *Rakshasas,* overnight. This is a well known device used by brahmins about many temples. May be, that was the real attitude of brahmins towards the Buddhists. They have called all charvakas as rakshasas, and they don't seem to make any difference between them, anyway.

Device of Mouni

Another device is to declare that God *mouni in kali yuga,* i.e. God observes silence in the present Kali era. This is a clever instrument to keep the masses away from the Doctrine, at the same time glorify the Master as a 'Guru', which could have been very useful in those early days of conversion from Buddhism to Brahmanism. 'Your God has gone silent, he does speak, does not preach, though you must worship him as a 'Guru' could be a good advice for the neo-converts to Brahamnism. We have to understand that in ancient times, and to same extent even now, the medium of approach to masses was folklore, folk theater, dramas, songs, and *bhajans, kirtans* and *pravachans*. These artistes were very efficient as propagators of 'god ordained' chaturvarnya, and even a small of slogan like 'mouni guru' is enough for their *pravachana* for the whole night. The importance of this device can only be appreciated if these facts are taken into consideration. People were bound to ask if Buddha is present avatara of God, how, are we supposed to observe *chaturvarnya* and caste, which is against Buddha's teachings. The ready made answer was that though he is avatara of god, his teachings are not to be followed, as he no more preaches in *kali yuga*, thereby making it imperative for them to observe *chaturvarnya* as was ordained by avatars previous to the avatara of Buddha. By silencing the *Guru* the Teachings were silenced. Avatara of Buddha, any way, was taught to be *maya moha* and was declared *apujya* i.e. unworshipable. 'Mouni guru' seems to be a part of a

broader conspiracy to allure the masses away from Teachings of the Buddha and at the same time retain His name in the scriptures, only for the names sake. We find Marathi saint poets lamenting about the "moun" of Vitthala, as previously mentioned.

Chapter 8 Chapter 10

Chapter 10
Vishnu Worship

Literary evidence

To understand the origin of Lord of Tirumalai as a Vishnu, we have to understand the origin of Vishnu worship in India. Prof. G. S. Ghurye has given comprehensive account and the following is the summary of it. [Ghurye: *Gods & men*: 140]

Sathpatha Brahmna and Taitreyya Aranyaka narrate a story which tries to explain the attainment of Supreme Godhead by Vishnu, who from being one of the many Vedic deities had been raised to this position in these texts. Highest place of Vishnu is also shown in Katha Upanishada. Baudhayan Grihyasutra (I,11,7)includes Narayana among twelve name of Vishnu. Later Vayu Purana and Mahabharata insist on identification of Narayana with Vishnu and Vasudeva Krishna. The name Padmanabha mentioned in Baudhayan Grihya Sutra shows that Sheshyashayi form was also conceived. Kalidas in Raghu Vansa gives a pen picture of this form of Vishnu. These are the earliest references in the literature.

Archaeological Evidence

The earliest invocation to Vishnu, and not to Vasudeva, Krishna, Keshava or Samkarshana, occurs in a Sanskrit Inscription of 404 A.D. and discovered at Mandsor in Gwalior district (Sircar).

(i) Earliest extant representation of Sheshashayi Vishnu is from 5th century brick temple at Bhitargav in Kanpur district.

(ii) The next is on a relief at half ruined temple at Devgadha in Lalitpur district, of 6th century. A.D.

(iii) Red stone relief at Badami of last quarter of 6th century A.D.

(iv) Aihole in Bijapur is from end of 8th century A.D.

(v) Pallava representation of this forms of Vishnu in the temple at Mahabalipuram is of middle of 8th century A.D.

In the reign of Vikramaditya (5th monarch of Gupta line), Boar Vishnu was sculptured in the cave at Udayagiri near Bhilsa and Bhopal in M.P.,and nearby at Eran a feudatory of Gupta under suzerainty of Hunas erected a stone temple having inscription of 500-515 A.D.to this deity in Boar form.

Later Vijayanagar monarchs in 14-16th centuries adopted Varaha form, adoption being so complete that their coins were called varahas.

Gajendra Moksha Vishnu is seen Deogadh temple of 6th century A.D.

We do not know about the sectarian affiliation of the first four Gupta kings. Fifth king Chandragupta II was described as Param Bhagwata. Sixth and seventh were named after Skanda. Skanda Gupta Junagadh inscription of 455-458 A.D.refers to Vamana or Trivikrama. Skanda Gupta having won great victory over Hunas created statue of Vishnu at Bhitar in Gazipur district of U.P.,in inscription he likens himself to Krishna. From the above account, it should be clear that the worship of Vishnu in its own form was quite late. The literary sources though believed to be earlier, there can always be a controversy about their dates. Here we are only concerned about Vishnu as such and not His *avataras*,as for our purpose, Lord in Tirumalai is believed to be Vishnu as such and not in any of the avatara forms.

Earliest popular form of Vishnu was reclining and not standing

The form of Vishnu which was popular in these early days was not in standing position, but in the *sheshashayi form. Prof. Ghurye observes:*

"To begin with, I shall take up the worship of Sheshashyayin form of Vishnu Narayana. For first, it is the form of Vishnu which according to Kalidasa was appealed to and by implication the form that has to be approached for incarnating for the good of humanity; second, it is the form which Rama, as stated by same poet mentioned to Seeta as residing in ocean beyond or near Lanka;third, it is the form that according to the account in Vayu Purana is the Super Cosmic source; fourth, it is the form in which Vishnu is invoked as the super god in one of the inscriptions of the beginning of the fifth century A.D.; and fifth, ***His representation on a brick of the Bhitargav Temple near Kanpur of the fifth century is perhaps the earliest of Vishnu***

representations."

Not only that, this was the most popular representation of Vishnu, but Laxmi as His consort was present only in this form till much later, till the period of Ramanuja. Prof. Ghurye observes:

"The genesis of this spread of Sheshashayi worship may be traced to Ramanuja's philosophy and personal inclination postulating Vishnu together with Laxmi as supreme deity. ***Sheshashayi form of Vishnu was the only one, at least till then, that had Laxmi described and shown being with Vishnu..."*** *[Ghurye: Ibid: 152]*

Other forms of Vishnu

Ghurye further observes:

"Next comes the form of God known simply as Vishnu in inconological and mythological literature. In the latter, Vishnu Anantashayin and Vishnu Garuda Vahana are the only deity that favoured the devotees by removing their trouble makers without resorting to incarnations..." [Ibid:153]

"Vishnu in other than Telugu Tamil districts is known either as Vishnu or more often as Laxmi Narayana or as in North India Balaji. In the former form his image is generally standing erect pose, very dignified. He has more often four arms than either two or eight and is par excellence "Chaturbhuja" four arms as Brahma is Chaturanana, "four faced". As Laxmi Narayana He has His consort Laxmi by His side. In South India, as in the Laxmi Narayana temple at the Tirupati hill in the North Arcot district, is the image of Laxmi Narayana, Laxmi seated, on the left lap of Vishnu with His two left arms entwining Her. This appears to be the more usual representation of this form of Vishnu in South India. It appears to me to be imitation of early Saivite images of Shiva in the embrace of Uma or Parvati." [Author is not referring to the Lord of Tirumalai]

"Vishnu has still other names in South India by which He is known in preference to Vishnu or even Laxmi Narayana. And these are Sri Nivasa, Venkatesa, Venkataramana. The deity of the most famous shrine of Tirupati is known as Venkatesha." [Ibid. 153 ff.]

Consorts of Vishnu

"From early iconological literature there has been a school of thought assigning two consorts to Vishnu, Sri or Laxmi and Bhu or Earth. But representation of Vishnu with two consorts is rare in North India till late, when Krishna cult familiarised the two consorts of Krishna viz. Satyabhama and Rukhmini. But in South India it is fairly common even in the form of Vishnu or Venkatesa since Ramanuja's system of Vaishnavism gives three consorts, Laxmi, Bhu or Earth and Lila..." [Ibid. 154]

Above is, in short, history of Vishnu worship. It is noteworthy that though literary identification of Vishnu with supreme God was in various texts for which quite early dates are claimed, the archaeological representation does not start much before the Gupta Age. Apart from the avatara form, Vishnu as such, is more important in the form of Ananta Sheshashayi.

There were many Vishnu shrines in South India but Tirumalai was not amongst them

We would like to see the conditions of Vishnu centres in South India, as given by Dr. S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar.

"... we may note down such inscriptional references as have cone down to us in regard to Vishnu shrines and Vishnu worship in this region of the country. The first inscriptional reference, in pint of time, is the record known as British Museum plates of Charudevi. This is a Prakrit charter issued in the reign of Maharaja Vijaya Buddhavarman and mother of Buddhyankura. It is a grant to a temple of Narayana at a place called Dalura. The nest one is what is known as the grant of Simhavarman. The record opens frankly with an invocation to Vishnu in the name of Bhgagavat, and purports to have been issued from the camp at Menmatura, and is a grant of Simhavarman, son of Maharaja Vishnugopa, who in turn is stated to have been the son of Maharaja Skandavarman. The next one is what is known as the Uruvappalli grant of Yuva Maharaja Vishnygopavarman who is described as a worshiper of Vishnu (Parama Bhagvata). It is a grant to the temple of God Vishnuhara at the village of Kandukura. The next one is what is known as the Mahendravadi inscription of Gunadhara. It is an inscription of the great Mahendravarman and the shrine is called Mahendra Vishnugraha on the bank of the Mahendratataka in the city of Mahendravadi,all of these names having reference to Mahrendravadi. The next one is Mahendagappattu of Vichitrachitta, another name of Mahendravarman. It refers to the to the construction of a cave-temple to Brahma Isvara and Vishnu by Mahendravarman. The next one is series known as the Vaikunthaperumal constructed by Nandivarman II, Pallavamalla. The temple is in Conjeevaram, and the inscriptions describe the circumstances under which

Nandivarman came to the throne of Kanchi. The next one is what is known as the Tandantottam plates of Kovijaya-Nandi- vikramavarman. This makes provision for the conduct of worship the local Vishnu and Siva temples and for the reading of the Mahabharata in the temple. A similar provision for the Mahabharata in the temple is referred to in the Kuram plates of Paramesvaravarman I, three or four generations earlier. The next reference is the inscription of the temple of Adivaraha at Mahabalipuram dated in the 65th year of the same sovereign Nandivarman II, Palla- vamalla. The next one is what is known as the Tiruvellarai inscription of Dantivarman in the Pundarikaksha Perumal temple near Trichinopoly. The next one is an inscription of the 9th year of Dantipottarasar in the Vaikunthaperumal temple at Uttaramallur, which is much nearer. Then we come to the Triplicane inscription of the same sovereign in the garbhagriha of the temple. This is dated in the 25th year of Dantivarman Maharaja and refers to a donation to the temple. The next one is one of the 21st year of the same king in the Vaikunthaperumal temple at Uttaramallur. The next on is a reference in the 51st year of Vijaya-Dantivikrama to the Perumanadigal at Tiruvilangovil in Tirucchokinur in Kudavur- Nadu, a sub-division of Tiruvengadakottam. If this Bijaya- Dantivikrama is the Dantivarman son of Nandivarman II this would be the earliest record in this region of the Pallavas. The next is a record in the Ulagalanda-Perumal temple at Conjeevaram dated in the 18th year of Nandipottarayar, victor at Tellaru obviously Nandivarman III. The next one is in the Venkatesapperumal temple at Tirumukkudal in the Madhurantakam Taluk of the 24th year of Nrpatungavarman. It is a gift of gold to the temple of Vishnu, which was taken charge of by the assembly of Siyyapuram, the modern Sivaram near Conjeevaram. This spread of the inscriptions, and the number of Vishnu shrines coming under reference would indicate the prevalence of Vishnu worship, at least as one of the popular religions of the country. ***But in all these there is still the remarkable omission of Tiruvengadam as a Vishnu Shrine,*** *which omission may be explained as being due to causes already indicated above." [S.Krishnasvami Aiyangar, History of Tirupati, vol. I, p.112, emphasis ours]*

Why there is no mention of Tirumalai

It is clear that though many centres of Vishnu worship are mentioned, there is no mention of Vengadam. The first reason suggested by Aiyangar is that the practice of inscriptions had not yet become common. He observes:

"...we find Pallava rule beginning betimes, almost immediately after the rule of Tondaman Ilam Tiraiyan, and we could mark three separate groups of rulers, as indicated before, from that period down to the later years of th 6th century. The point of consideration at present is ***why these rulers who have left some inscriptional records of their own in various other places, have left none in the shrine of Tirupati. We cannot say exactly why.*** *Tirupati must have been in age of the Pallavas as inaccessible as in the earlier, and even down to the much later period of the Cholas, and the practice of recording of inscriptions gifts to the temples had not become so much a vogue as yet. That seems to be enough explanation, and, at any rate,* ***that is all that we are in a position to offer. ...****" [Aiyangar: I,106]*

The second reason given is that, being an area under frontier disputes no important person could visit. He observes:

"...Pallava sovereigns of this dynasty though engaged primarily in war were not negligent of their duties as civil rules. Their achievement is on the whole very considerable both in useful public works and in the pious acts of benefactions to religion. Notwithstanding this we do not find them to have done anything worthy of record to the holy shrine at Vengadam, notwithstanding the fact that the shrine had attained to great fame early in its history. This can be explained as due more or less to Vengadam being on a frontier in dispute between the Pallavas and their northern neighbours for one reason." [Aiyangar: I,111]

Both these explanations are far-fetched and unjustifiable. One may not forget that lithic records had started about thousand years ago during Ashoka's reign. And the argument that, because of frontier area no dignitary visited it, is most unsatisfactory. Kings and their ministers do not keep away from the religious places simply because of their locations at border area. The real reason seems to be that this area was stronghold and home land of Kalabhras, who were Buddhists by faith, and hence rulers who were anti Buddhist were not expected to visit the place.

The explanation that inscription were rare those days is also flimsy and unbelievable, and even the scholars like Ragavacharya did not accept the explanation.

Tirumalai was not important for Hindus

Raghavacharya, however gives another explanation that the temple was not important. This is what he observes:

"An attempt was made in the last chapter to show that neither the so-called Puranic accounts nor other

legends can be trusted to explain when and why the God of Tiruvengadam manifested Himself on the Hill, and why the Hill itself came to be credited with the virtue of burning away all sins. It cannot however, be doubted that the Hill was considered sacred and the Deity thereon more so. The fact that ***neither the Hill not the Deity thereon is mentioned by name in the Itihasas, the Vishnu Purana, Sri Bhagavatam and the Bharatam*** *[Emphasis ours] does not militate against it. It was however, rarely resorted to by pilgrims in ancient times.*

"So was and still is Ahobilam, to which among the Alwars only Sri Tirumangai Alwar seems to have paid a visit. It was so inaccessible. It came into prominence during the period of the Sangama Dynasty of the Vijayanagar Kings and after the battle of Talikota again relapsed into obscurity. ... There was no regular daily worship although the Temple is said to have been consecrated according to the Pancharatra Agama by the Ahobila Mutt Jiyars. There was a Niyogi Brahmin of the Cuddapah District doing puja voluntarily although he knew nothing of the Agama form of worship. ... This was for the Tiruvilankoyil God in the plains. Five miles away on the Hill is the real Ugra Narasimhaswamy partly in a rock cut cave. There was no daily puja for Him. ... Outside the temple, and even inside the Gopuram, animal sacrifice used to be made by the villagers making the waters of the Bhavanasini stream (on whose banks the temple is situated) turn red with blood.

*"**Tiruvengadam might have been in similar state in the earlier stages.** Except for the Alwars singing its glory, there was nothing historically great about it. Epigraphical researches disclose that some Vishnu temples existed from unknown times and more were built from time to time and endowed by the Pallava Kings...." [Raghavacharya: I,50]*

The author then mentions the Charudevi plates, Uruvappalli grant, Mahendravadi inscription, Mandagappatu inscription, inscription of the Pallavaram cave temple, and further observes:

*"**During the eighth century A.D. and the 9th century also grants were made very near to Tirupati for the Siva and Vishnu temples as may be seen from inscription in Gudimallam in Chittoor District, Tiruvallam (North Arcot District) and Tirumukkudal (Venkatesa's temple)** [Emphasis ours] These are not repeated here in extenso as we are not much concerned with the details. Among the donors are the Bana Kings (Mavali Vana Rayas) one of whom Vijayaditya Banarayas a donor for the Tiruchukanur Tiruvilankoyil about the closing years of the 9th century A.D. **The absence of any inscription showing grant of land or relating to the construction of a temple on Tirumalai cannot therefore be accounted for only by a simple statement that inscriptions were rare in those days** as Dr.S.Krishnaswami Ayyangar would have us believe. It can be accounted for only by assuming that the Tirumalai temple, although considered sacred, was not considered important. That must also have been the reason for having a Tiruvilankoyil in those early days." [Raghavacharya: I,50]*

Tirumalai being a Buddhist Centre, was unimportant to Hindus

It was not mentioned in 'Itihasas' meaning Ramayana and Mahabharata, neither in Vishnu Puranas nor even in the Bhagavat Purana, which is believed to have been compiled around 10th century A.D. Many Brahmanic shrines just nearby Tirumalai are mentioned in inscriptions. Then why not Tirumalai? It would seem that though sacred, the temple was not important to Hindus as compared to temples mentioned in the inscriptions.

That raises another question. ***When Vengadam was famous for festivals in Sangam age, how did it loose its fame and why was it not important till about tenth century A.D., till Bhoga Srinivasa was installed?*** *The most satisfactory explanation is that it was not important as a Vishnu shrine, simply because it was a Buddhist temple and could become important as a Vishnu Shrine only after the idea of Buddha being an Avatara of Vishnu caught the imagination of masses, after decline of Buddhism, and after the fall of Kalabhras.*

Chapter 9 Chapter 11

Chapter 11
Hindu Shilpa Shastra on Vishnu Images

Three poses Vishnu Images

How the images of Vishnu were ordained to be made by the Agamas and other texts? We will discuss the most salient point from Sitapati's 'Sri Venkatesvara'

Sitapati observes:

"The Vishnu images are generally shown in one of the three poses - *sthanaka, asana* and *sayana*, Sthanaka is the standing pose, Asana is the sitting pose, and Sayana is the reclining pose. ... The *Agama sastras* such as the Vaikhanasa Agama, the Pancharatra Agama, the Tantrasara and Vishnu Dharmottaram lay down the principles on which Vishnu images are to be made. There are four important types of Vishnu images namely Yoga, Bhoga, Veera and Abhicharika types. ... Vishnu images have usually four arms, the *ayudhyas* or weapons held in the hand usually being *Chakra, Sankha* or conch, the bow and arrows and the *gada* or club. ... The hands are usually in the Abhaya, Varada, and Katyavalambita poses. ... The Abhaya pose is the one in which the Lord holds his hand aloft, with the right palm facing the devotee with all the fingers of the hand pointing upwards. ... The Varada hasta is the pose in which the Lord holds His hand (left hand) with the palm facing the devotee with all the fingers of the hand pointing downwards. ... The Katyavalambita hasta pose is the one in which the Lord keeps His hand (left hand) on the kati or waist ... Vishnu images are shown to carry several ornaments such as the *padma* or the lotus, *Kireeta* or the crown, *Makara Kundalas* or crocodile ear ornaments around the waist, *Kati bandhas or* ornaments around the waist and hips, the sacred thread etc. There is usually a mole on the right chest called *Srivatsa* and a garland reaching up to the knees called the *Vaijayantimala. Sree Koustubam* is a gem studded jewel on the chest which is sacred to Laxmi. The consort of the Lord is usually carved or exhibited near the *Srivatsa* and the Sree Koustubam..." [Sitapati:9]

Lord of Venkatesvara Image

"...The Lord's image at Tirumalai is a Sthanaka or standing figure. The worship in the Sri Venkatesvara Temple at Tirumalai follows the Vaikhanasa Agama. It is, therefore, relevant and necessary for us to inform ourselves about the rules laid down in the Vaikhanasa Agamas for Vishnu images in Sthanaka pose. According to Mariach Samhita, Vishnu images in Sthanaka pose can be Yoga, Bhoga, Veera or Abhicharika murthis. In each type there would be three subtypes, namely then Uttama, Madhyama and Adhama Murthis." [Sitapati: 13]

"The Yoga-Uttama-Sthanak murthis should be Syam (dark) in colour with four arms; the Sankha and Chakra should be exhibited; one of the right hands should be in the Abhaya hasta pose, while one of the left hands should be in the Katyavalambita pose. On the right, the sages Bhrigu and Markandeya should be seated. Brahma with four arms should be shown as standing near the right side facing north with his ayudhyas such as Aksha Mala and Kamandala; two of his hands should be in the Abhaya and Katyavalambita posses. Siva should be shown facing south with four arms, two of them in the Abhaya and Katyavalambita poses and other two holding a Mriga (deer) and a Parasu (axe). The complexion of Siva should be white."

"In the Yoga-Madhyama-murthi, the Parivara devathas Brahma and Siva should be absent. In the Yoga-Adhama-Sthanaka murthi sages Bhrigu and Markandeya should be absent"

"The Bhoga Uttama-Sthanaka murthi should be dark in colour with four arms. The Sankha and Chakra should be exhibited. One of the right hands should be either in the Abhaya or Varada Hasta poses. One of the left hands should be in the Katyavalambita simhskarana pose. Siva and Brahma should stand to the right; Sri Devi or Laxmi with a lotus in left hand and a *Prasaritha Dakshina Hasta* (extended right hand) should stand to the right while Bhudevi with *Prasaritha* and *Druthotpala hastas* should stand to the left. The Parivara Devas and sages include Bhrigu, Ved Vyasa, Maya, Samhladini Vyaygini, Thumbru, Narada, Kinnara, Mithuna, Yaksha, Vidyadhara, Sanaka, Sanath Kumara, Surya and Chandra."

"In the Bhoga-Madhyama-Sthanak murthi, Thumburu, Narada, Yaksha and Vidyadhara should be absent"

"In the Bhoga-Adhama-Sthanaka murthi, the Sun and the Moon should be absent"

"The Veera-Adhama-Sthanaka murthi should be Syama in colour with four arms. The *sankha* and *chakra* should be exhibited. Brahma and Siva should be on the right and left sides. Similarly Bhrigu and Markandeya, Kishkinda and Sundara, Vyajaka, Sanaka, Sanath Kumara, the Sun and the Moon should be present." "In the Veera-Madhyama Sthanaka murthi, Kishkindha, Sundara, Sanaka and Sanath Kumara

should be absent. In the Veer- Adhama-Sthanka murthi, Sun, the Moon and the sages should be absent."

"All the Abhicharika Sthanaka Murthis should have two or four arms. The colour of the murthi should be gray (Dhuma Varna-colour of smoke). The murthi should have dark lips, withered or dried up limbs, should exhibit thamoguna; should have eyes turned upwards. The Parivardevas, Brahma etc. should be absent. It should however be surrounded by paisachas or evil spirits, and should not have any auspicious qualities."

Self manifested murthi

There are stories in Puranas about the murthi being *swayambhu,* i.e. self-manifested. Let us see the gist of these stories in Sitapati's own words:

"...Lord Srinivasa manifested himself in a celestial vimanam on the Swami Pushkarni located on the Lord's Kridadri or Seshachalam and that this Kridadri or Venkatachalam was specially brought down to earth from Sri Vaikuntam, the Lord's abode. The manifestation was in the yuga of the Sweta Varaha Kalpa. In this age Brahma was the first to worship the Lord. The Lord then became as idol assuming the *archavatara* in Kaliyuga. This idol was discovered in an anthill by one Tondaiman with the assistance of one Rangadasa and was first worshipped by the sage Vaikhanasa ..." [Sitapati:15]

Shri Sitapati further observes:

"If the above claim that the Lord's image is a self manifested figure is accepted, **the question of examining it from the standpoint of the Agamas and Silpasastras does not arise at all**. It would however be interesting to study the Lord's image first and examine how far it conforms or differs from the standards of construction, excellence etc. laid down in the Agamas, particularly the Vaikhanasa Maricha Samhita."

Description of Lord's Image

Shri Sitapati then describes the image: [Sitapati: 16]

About height etc:

"...The Lord's image is in Sthanaka or standing pose. The Lord is standing on a high lotus pedestal. The height of the Lord has never been recorded, but cannot be less than nine feet from the tip of the 'mukutam' i.e., the crown to the bottom of the lotus pedestal as can be seen clearly on a Friday when 'abhishekam' is done after removing all the gold 'kavachas' etc. ornamenting this figure. The priest performing the worship, about five feet tall, standing on a stool two and a half feet high is not able to perform 'abhishekam' on the Lord's mukuta without assistance from a priest standing behind the idol. Keeping in view this fact and that the pedestal on which the Lord stands is itself below the floor in the sanctum sanctorium, the Lord stands is itself below the floor in the sanctum sanctorium, the Lord's figure from tip of the crown to the vase of the lotus pedestal, must measure between nine and ten feet".

About the beauty etc:

"The image is perfection personified, and it would not be incorrect to say is the most handsome and perfectly featured idol of India."

About the material etc:

"According to tradition, the idol is a manifestation of the Lord in Saligram Sila.... The idol of the Lord is liberally anointed frequently with civet or 'punugu' oil; this application of oil makes the idol dark in colour and does not enable us to make an accurate assessment of the material of the image. The material of the idol could be granite or the red igneous rock..."

About the eyes etc.:

"...The Lord's majestic beauty is best seen at the time of the Friday Abhishekam when the jewels and other paraphernalia do not cover our view of Him in His celestial glory. It is at this time that we see the eyes of the Lord in the 'sama drishti pose' showering divine grace... The eyes neither look up nor downwards, but straight into devotees' eyes (as laid down in *Sukraniti*)..."

About the face etc.:

"The face is beaming with joy and wears a smile. An aura of meditation and abundant love is the constant atmosphere around the Lord, wearing a *mukuta* or crown which is more than 20 inches high."

About the hair etc.:

"The Lord's figure is richly adorned with flowing locks of hair or *jata juta* and some of these locks of curly hair rest on his shoulders."

About the mouth and nose etc.:

"The nose is delicately carved and is neither prominent nor flat. The mouth of the Lord is also exquisitely shaped. According to *Pratima Mana Lakshanam* the mouth should be made slightly smiling, pleasant and possessed of all good signs. One should absolutely avoid the construction of the mouth which is passionate, impetuous, wrathful, sour, bitter, or circular. ... The chin and the ears are carved proportionately. The ears wear beautiful ear ornaments..."

About the body etc.:

"The chest of the Lord is magnificent in cut and size and should, if measured, be between 36 to 40 inches in width, while the waist would be between 24 to 27 inches. The neck is conch like and the body in the posture of a lion and exquisitely shaped. The belly is also beautifully modeled."

About the arms etc:

"The Lord's image has four arms, the upper two being carved to hold the chakram and the conch; **the chakram and the conch are not integral parts of the main idol.** The upper right arm holds the *Sudarshana Chakra;* the upper left arm holds the Panchajanya, ... The lower right hand of the Lord is in the Varada hasta pose, while the lower left hand is in the Katyavalambita pose. Actually the fingers of the left hand rest on the left thigh, with the thumb of the hand almost parallel to the waist line..."

About posture etc.:

"While the idol itself is not exactly standing in the *tribhang* pose, as in the case of Shri Rama idols, the near and below the waist has taken a slight tilt to the left and the knees themselves are bent and open slightly outwards, giving the idols peculiar grace and charm".

About Laxmi etc.:

"Mother Laxmi is carved on the right chest of the Lord in the sitting pose and is an integral part of the *mula murthi."*

About ornaments etc.:

"The *yajnopavitam* and a set of four necklaces or ornaments of the neck can also be clearly made out on the idol. The arms have armlets with finger-like projection which appear to be Nagabhushanams or Cobra ornaments. A cobra is also said to be coiled around the Lord's right arm. The figure is depicted as wearing a *dhoti* from the waist downwards, while the upper portion is not covered by any dress or vastram. The nipples of the Lord on his chest are button like and are prominent. There is however a *katibandham* or waistband and this waistband is about 2 inches thick."

About legs etc.:

"The legs and feet of the Lord are beautifully shaped, strong and lissome, As indicated earlier, both the knees are bent and open slightly outward, giving the stately figure charm and grace, that words cannot adequately describe. The feet are models of perfection and have ornaments near the anklets."

About bow marks etc.:

"The Lord's image has on the shoulders marks resembling 'scars made by the constant wearing of the bow and a pack of arrows'."

The Image resembles Bodhisattva Image

After describing the murthi, Shri Sitapati observes:

"The perfectly modelled image of the Lord is personified beauty and is indeed a Divya Manohara Murthi. **The image bears some resemblance to the famous Bodhisattva Padmapani painting in cave I of the**

Ajanta Hills. Bodhisattva has of course only two arms; but if the Bodhisattva is shown with four arms and with his neck erect and his eyes in the *Sama Drishti* pose instead of the *Avanita Drishti* pose, the Bodhisattva would appear as if it is study of the Lord at Tirumalai." [Sitapati: 20 emphasis ours]

Shri Sitapati, however, hastily adds:

"The resemblance can only be ascribed to chance and no inference whatsoever can be made linking up the two."

He, of course, does not give any reasons why the two should not be linked, neither he explains why there is so much resemblance. We will have more to say about this later.

The Image does not conform to Vishnu Images

Sitapati further observes:

"We may now examine how far the image conforms to the yardsticks of construction, exhibition etc. laid down in the Maricha Samhita. The figure is *syama* in colour, and has four arms. It is not a Yoga-Sthanaka Vishnu, as the right hand according to Maricha Samhita has to be an Abhaya Hasta. In fact, the Lord only exhibits a Varada hasta and not an Abhaya Hasta. The other deities mentioned as essential for a Yoga sthanaka image are absent. The image is also not a Bhoga or Veera or an Abhicharika murthi as one or the other of the characteristics mentioned in the *Maricha Samhita* are not satisfied by the Murthi." [Sitapati:20]

Pre-Agamic Image of Different Class

Sitapati observes thus:

"One can therefore argue that the Lord's image is a super- agamic manifestation, that is, one that existed before the Agamas came into being. Another plausible argument is that the image is class by itself and not simple Vishnu image. It is one that combines in the Hari and Hara aspects of the Supreme Spirit." [Sitapati:20]

It should be noted that no rules can be framed in a vacuum. So when the Agamas described the norms, these were prescribed on the basis of Vishnu images in existence at the time of writing of Agamas. Age of Agamas is believed to be about 9th century, and the Vaikhanasa Agama is believed to be earlier one. T. A. Gopinath Rao observes:

"The prose recension of the Vaikhanasagma is perhaps the oldest among the Agamas of the Vaishnavas. The same work is also in verse; and this is distinctly of a later date. ... that the Vaikhanasagama, as it is in verse, is certainly not older than the 9th century A.D." [Rao: I,56]

Though the Agamas were written later on, this does not mean that artists sculpturing the Image of Lord of Tirumalai did not know that Vishnu images must have weapons. Because the Agamic rules were followed in Murthis older than Agamas. Rao observes:

"In the sculptures of Mahabalipuram and in other Dravidian rock cut shrines, including the famous Kailasa at Ellora, it is the Vaikhanasagama that appears to have been followed ..." [Rao: I,78]

He further observes:

"Thus it may be seen that the age of the Agamas and the Tantras is mainly between the 9th and the 12th centuries of the Christian era. But the descriptions of the images as contained in them may nevertheless, be older than this period. It is well to bear in mind that these descriptions were most probably not invented by the authors of the Agama works under consideration, but were collected from various authoritative sources. In proof of this, may be mentioned that Varahamihira who is known to have lived in the 6th century, gives descriptions of certain images and that his descriptions of certain images are not in any way different from those found in these later Agama works. The rules for the making of the images must have indeed been formulated at a much earlier time, and must have long remained unwritten..." [Rao: I,58]

The Lord of Vengadam does not fit in with any of the rules prescribed in Agamas. Therefore the possibility that the image was that of Vishnu can be ruled out on this basis alone. Because the compilers of Agamas would have taken into consideration, all the Vishnu images in existence, without any exception while prescribing the norms. At least, the **absence of weapons in the Image, certainly, cannot be explained away by saying that the image is pre-Agamic.** The Image existed and definitely would have been taken into consideration by compilers of Agamas, if it was considered to be a Vishnu Image at that time. However,

the examination of Lord's Image from iconographical point discussed in Chapter 19.

Summary

We would recapitulate the important points in Shri Sitapati's Account.

*. 1. The weapons of the Lord in His upper two arms i.e. sankha and chakra are not integral parts of the murthi, showing that the original murthi was without weapons, and these were added later. These are made of gold, as per Bharatiya Sanskriti Kosh (Marathi) which observes: "Even today, the weapons in the hands of image are not original and placed in the Murthi's hands later on and are made of gold." [*bhartiya sanskruti kosh,* IV,117]

*. 2. The image resembles, in great detail, with the Bodhisattva Padmapani of Ajanta Cave No.1

*. 3. The murthi of Lord Venkatesvara does not conform with any of the different Vishnu murthis as discussed above.

*. 4. The image is of the period before the period of Agamas, and/or that it is class by its own,.

We will now proceed to see what was thought to be the nature of the murthi from time to by different people in further chapters.

Chapter 10 Chapter 12

Chapter 12
Nature of Image of the Lord of Tirumalai

The nature of Lord of Tirumalai has always been a matter of discussion.

Disputes about Nature of Lord Venkatesvara

Sitapati observes:

"Is Lord Venkatesvara of Tirumalai a manifestation of Vishnu of Siva? Is He manifestation of Subramanya Swamy or Shakti? These are the questions which time and again agitate the minds of the devotees. ... Shri Vaishnavas hold that the Lord is Vishnu and Vishnu alone, while Shaivas, who see in Him their Ishta Daivam Shiva, hold with equal enthusiasm that He is Shiva. Some again hold the view that the image is that of Skanda. A few Sakti worshipers also believe that the deity is Parasakkti. Several devotees of the Lord are again of the view that He is the combination of Vishnu and Shiva elements and is in fact a Hari-Hara murthi. There are again others who hold that Lord Venkatesvara is manifestation of Paravasudeva." [Sitapati: 21]

Court Disputes in 11th or 12th century A.D.

Sitapati gives an account of the court proceedings that took place in 11th or 12th century A.D., the details of which are important. He observes:

"The controversy about the Hara nature of the Lord was actually argued by the contending parties in the 11th or 12th centuries A.D. before a Yadava Raja of Narayanvanam in the Jaykonda Chola Manadalam. The Sri Venkatachal Itihas Mala, a Sanskrit work of the 12 th century, describes in detail in the first three stabakas a scholarly discussion carried on at a high intellectual level long long ago, between the Vaishnavites led by Sri Ramanuja and the Saivites about the nature of the Lord's image at Tirumalai - whether it was a Shaivite image or the image of Vishnu..." [Sitapati: 21]

Points against it being Vishnu as argued by Shaivas

"The image of the Lord in Tirumalai is that of Skanda or Kumara Swami. The holy Pushkarni on Tirumalai itself is therefore called Swami Pushkarni. Swami is really an appellation commonly used for Skanda or Kumara Swami. The shortened form 'Swami' is used instead of calling the Pushkarni 'Kumara Swami Pushkarni'. It is not unusual for nouns to be used thus in the shortened from. For example, the nouns Bheema sena and Satya Bhama are usually used in the shortened forms as Bheema and Bhama. The Vamana Purana also mentions that Skanda performed penance on Venkatachala on the advice of father Siva. The image of the Lord at Tirumalai is that of Skanda and not Vishnu, Venkatachalam is primarily a Varaha kshetram and as Vishnu has already manifested Himself here in the Boar from, the image of the Lord at Tirumalai can only be that of Skanda.

"The image of the Lord has not got the characteristic weapons of Vishnu such as the Chakra and the Skanda came to perform tapas on the banks of Pushkarni and has manifested himself without his weapons or his extra hands. Vaishnavites had taken possession of the temple of Subramanaya and had converted it into a Vishnu temple. The presence of the matted locks or jata jutas on the image and the Nagabhushanams (snake ornaments) prove that it is a Saivite image. Puja is also done in the temple with 'bilva' leaves; bilva are used only for worship in Saivite temple and not used for Vishnu worship. **The image has also a crescent mark on the head** indicating that the image is Siva if not Kumara Swami.

Points in favour of it being Vishnu as argued by Vaishnavas

"The term 'Swami' need not apply to Kumaraswami. It only means that Swami Pushkarni is the 'Swami' in 'tirthams' and thus a Lord among the holy tirthas. The holy tirtha associated with Kumaraswami is Kumaradhara. The Varaha Purana also mentions that Swami Pushkarni is the sporting tank of Vishnu brought down to earth from Vaikuntham. All the Puranas state conclusively that the deity on the Pushkarni is the Lord of Laxmi. Skanda came to worship Vishnu at Tirumalai. It would also be deified on Venkatachalam. The Lord's image has four arms and one face whereas Skanda should normally have six faces and twelve hands. In the verses of Nammalvar the deity is recognized clearly as Vishnu.

The image does not bear the sankha and chakra because Lord Vishnu in His infinite divine grace parted with the weapons to assist his devotee Tondaiman Chakravarti in battle against his enemies. This is confirmed in Bramhand Purana. While it is true that worship is done in the temple with bilva, it can be argued that bilva is acceptable to Lakshmi, and what is acceptable to Lakshmi is naturally acceptable to her consort, Vishnu. Vishnu images can also have jata jutas as laid down in the Bhagwata. The

Nagabhushanams can not be strong arguments as Padma Purana mentions of instances of Vishnu wearing naga figures. The Bhavishyottara Purana also mentions that naga jewels were presented by Akasa Raja to his son in law and the wearing of the jewels cannot be said to be peculiar. The image of the Lord has Vakshasthala Lakshmi and also the Srivatsa mark. Even the early Alvaras who stressed the Saiva features of the image speak of him as Narayana only. The Puranas also mention that Brahma and Rudra came to worship Srinivasa when he manifested himself on Tirumalai. **It is true that image has a mark on its face resembling that of crescent-moon.** This however can not mean that this is a Saivite character. The image is certainly not even a Hari-Hara manifestation and is clearly a Vishnu figure." [emphasis ours]

It was Ramanuja who managed to place the weapons in the hands of the Murthi

"The Itihas Mala then states that the local ruler was fully convinced by the arguments and gave his award in favour of the Vaishnavas. Before this to put the matter beyond doubt, Ramanuja is said to have requested the king that the weapons of Vishnu and the weapons of Siva should be made and left in the temple and the matter left for finalisation by the Lord of Tirumalai Himself. Accordingly weapons of Vishnu and Siva were placed before the Lord and the temple doors closed. That night Ramanuja is said to have approached the Lord as Adishesha and prayed to the Lord to assume the Vaishnavite weapons. And lo! When the temple doors were opened next morning the Lord was found wearing the conch and the chakra! This legend from the Itihas Mala informs us that the controversy about the Hari-Hara character of the Lord existed even in the 12th century. Sri Ramanuja, himself a Srivaishnava, seems to have made up his mind to worship the Lord at Tirumalai as Lord Vishnu. **The Saivite pundits of his age were certainly no match to this genius and the sage of Visitha Advaita, and there is no wonder that he won in the battle of wits, puranic lore and yogic powers and arranged for the worship of the Lord of Tirumalai from thenceforth as VISHNU"** [Sitapati: 25 emphasis ours]

The image which was neglected can not be a Brahmanic one

From the above account of controversy, it is clear that Ramanuja somehow managed to get the image declared as that of Vishnu. One thing that is lost sight of is the fact that, the image must have been lying unclaimed at least for some time, before being taken up for worship by Vaishnavas or by Shaivas. This is also clearly seen from the legendary account that the image was found buried in an anthill. This legend may be taken to mean that it was neglected by original devotees, though it may not have been actually in an ant hill. There was never a time in the history of the region of Tondai Mandalam when either the Vaishnavites or the Saivites were so dormant, depressed and helpless. On the contrary it was only the Buddhists, who had to face the attacks of Saivites and Vaishnavites together. This was the reason for abandoning of the temples by the Buddhists, at various places, as already seen. There were no Buddhists left to claim the image as theirs. The very fact that the Saivites and the Vaishnavites had to fight for a neglected image, in an 'unimportant' temple, gives ample evidence that it belonged to neither of them. The arguments put forward by Ramanuja and the episode of weapons of Vishnu being taken over by the Lord Himself, might have satisfied the intelligence of Yadava Raja, but it is certainly not sufficient for people of this century.

Shaivas and Vaishnavas conspired to claim the murthi for Brahmanism

Dave, while commenting on this episode of Ramanuja managing to put weapons of Vishnu in the hands of the Lord, observes:

"Whatever the dispute, the conception of the Tirupati appears to belong to that age 'when the dominant feeling was not sectarian either Saiva or Vaishnava-but a period of compromise when sectarianism had to be kept under control because of other enemies to overcome',..." [Dave: I,117]

These 'other enemies' of course were none other than the Buddhists and Jains, as Aiyangar had observed previously in the same vein:

"The period was one in which people were making an effort to provide for worship for the masses of people, probably with a view to wean then from attachment to and attractions of other contemporary religions such as Jainism and Buddhism. It was therefore not so much of distinction, much less of antagonism, between Vaishnavism and Shaivism; but it was rather of Hinduism, kind of transformed Brahmanism as against the two heretical religions from the point of view of the Hindu..." [Aiyangar: I,195]

Thus the Vaishnavas and Shaivas, together, conspired to retain the Murthi for Brahmanic use.

Chapter 13
Is the Image a Female Deity?

Points in favour of Devi theory

At the time of Ramanuja, controversy about the nature of Lord was only between worshipers of Vishnu and those of Shiva. But now there appears to be a group of devotees who claim the Lord of Tirumalai as a female deity.

Their claim rests on the following points as mentioned by Sitapati:

"...Holders of this view usually quote a verse from the Devi Bhagwatam which describes the Lord as 'Sri Venkateswari', the only deity of Kaliyuga. Certain practices in temple such as the use of turmeric paste for the abhishekam of the Lord, the fact that the abhishekam for the Mula Vigraham is done on Fridays, the fact that 'tomal seva' is called 'Bhagvati Aradhana' and that Srisukta mantras are read during this abhishekam of the Lord are relied upon by them to make out a case that the Lord is Shakti or Kali or Durga. Uniquely enough the temple Vimanam has the 'Sakteya symbol' on it-the lion-and not the Garuda, as one would normally expect. The Lord is called 'Bala'or 'Balaji' in the Nort and as 'Bala' stands for a girl, these contend that the presiding deity at Tirumalai is the Divine Prakriti Herself." [Sitapati:25]

Symbol of Lion does not necessarily imply Shakti worship

There is hardly anything to comment on the points raised by Sitapati. Only thing one could understand is that Lion which is believed to be a 'sakteya symbol', was considered to be Buddhist symbol from much earlier times than the shaki puja came into vogue. Lord Buddha was Himself called 'Sakya simha' meaning a Lion among the Shakyas. The so called Lion Capital of Asokan Sarnath pillar is in reality a *Dhamma Chakra Pravartan* Capital. It was seen like that by Hiuen-Tsang.

Lion Capital is in fact Dhamma Chakra Capital

Dr. L.M.Josi describes it as follows:

"The excellent example of this type is the so called 'Lion Capital' from Saranatha, now the exalted emblem of the Indian Union. It is in fact the 'Dharma Chakra-capital' and not the 'Lion Capital'! Originally, the pillar of Sarnath was crowned by a wheel placed in a deep socket between the heads of the lion. Not only the seven fragments of the wheel are extant in the Sarnath museum but also the above words of Hiuen-Tsang prove that this was a Dharma-Chakra-Capital and not a Lion Capital, though the latter name has attained wide renown. Its right designation should be Dharma-Chakra- Capital." [Joshi: 49]

Percy Brown has given a reconstructed picture of this Dharma-chakra-capital. [Percy Brown: I, 16]

Garuda is missimg

Of course, the lions on the temple of Tirumalai do not have any Boddhist meaning. The vimanam of this temple is built much later than the Buddhist times and those who put the lions there did not put there as symbols of Buddha, perhaps Buddha was long forgotten before the vimanam was built, but the fact remains that Garuda is missing from the vimanam, and even during the late times of building the vimanam, Garuda was not thought to be a symbol to be put there, by the then followers of the Lord.

Female aspects are more in favour of Buddhist Image

It is worth noting, that the association of worship of female deity with the worship of Vishnu is quite late as we have seen, and is in the form of consort, and not as a main deity, worship by courtesy and not by right. It is worth mentioning that if the practice of using turmeric etc. denote Sakti worship then in the late phases of Buddhism - Tantrika Buddhism, with which we are directly concerned, the worship of female element was predominant. In any case if there is any indication that it was a deity of worshipers of female goddess then the association of female deity with the Buddhist pantheon is pertinent to be noted, and the presence of female aspects associated with this shrine does not in any way antagonize the possibility of a Buddhist creed. And the presence of male and female aspects in one and the same murthi, - iconologically as well as historically - should go more in favour of it being a Buddhist Image than that of Vishnu.

Chapter 12 Chapter 14

Chapter 14
Is the Lord a Harihara Murthi?

Worship of Hari Hara forms started late

It is claimed that Lord could be an image of Harihara. In this regard we should consider as to when did Harihara forms came into vogue?

As a matter of fact, Hari Hara forms of worship i.e. fused forms of Siva and Vishnu, was quite late and it originated out of the attempts at syncretization, and bringing together of Vaishnavas and Shaivas with the primary intention of fighting against the enemies of Brahmanism, and their appearance starts around eighth or ninth century, in any case much later than the appearance of the murthi of Lord of Tirumalai. So in the present context, when the time of appearance of image of Tirupati is thought to be earlier, it is irrelevant and should not have been necessary to consider the Lord as a Hari Hara manifestation. But as the modern scholarship is keen on declaring it as a Hari Hara murthi, we will consider this view in short.

Contradictory remarks of Sitapati

Sitapati gives the following account to show it to be a Hari Hara murthi:

"Several Puranas no doubt say that Venkatachalam is a Vishnu Kshetram. The Svetha - Varaha Murthi and the Lord Venkatesvara are the deities of Tirumalai. The acceptance of the Lord as a 'Hari-Hara Murthi' will in no way conflict with the claim of the Puranas that Venkatachalam is a Vishnu Kshetram. ..." [Sitapati:26]

Thus giving contradictory remarks, he gives the following points in support of this theory.:

1. "... The Lord's Hill also bears the name Srisailam, and Srisailam is sacred to Lord Siva."

2. "According to sri Dave, 'in the famous Dwadasa Jyotirlinga stotra of Sri Sankaracharya, there is a description of Mallikarjuna of the Srisaila mountain which is part of the Seshachlam Hills and Srisaila itself is used as a name for Tirupati."

3. "... puranas view the range of hill from Tirupati to Srisailam, famous for its Mallikarjuna temple as one unit."

4. Puranas give a graphic description of a cobra to hill associating four shrines viz. Kalahasti, Tirupati, Ahobilam, and Srisailam.

One could have laughed off these arguments, but for the personality like sri Sitapati, and his attempts to project his hypothesis in world Telugu Conference.

None of the above points is any evidence of it being a Hari Hara Murthi, as it only connects the shrine of Tirumalai with Srisailam. On the contrary, if anything, this Puranik link proves our point that all these were Buddhist shrines. The account of Srisailam is already narrated by us (chapter 7) showing it to be Buddhist shrine and how sword and fire was used to capture it for Brahmanism under the very supervision of Adi Shankara.

There is another hypothesis, which he has postulated is that of "Vyakta Vishnu and Vyakta-Avyakta Shiva", which seem to be more popular in recent times. This novel hypothesis contemplates that the Lord's image is not that type of Hari-Hara showing the fused forms of Vishnu and Shiva but because of certain features resembling both Shiva and Vishnu being present in the Murthi, it is still a Hari-Hara and that the 'early Alvaras' thought it to be "Manifested Vishnu, manifested-non-manifested Shiva". As the real evidence for this hypothesis as given by him, concerns Alwaras, we will discuss this point in the Chapters on Alwaras.

Chapter 13 Chapter 15

Chapter 15
Account in Venkatachala Itihas Mala

There are some scholars who consider that the murthi was not declared as that of Vishnu at the time of Ramanuja, but it was so even before him. Such scholars consider that the Venkatachala Itihas Mala is a book of fables. Our interest in this book is limited to show the acts done by Ramanuja in Tirumalai and Tirupati.

Is it a book of fables?

T.K.T.Veer Ragavachary is one of those who consider so. He observes:

"The other book of some facts and more fables and untruths is the Itihas Mala on which Dr. S. Krishna Swami Aiyangar based some reliance, but soon found that it defied facts and historical dates. This book relates mainly to the activities of Shri Ramanuja. Palm leaf books have been more successfully tampered with than would be possible with printed books." [Raghavacharya: I,39]

Every palm leaf text is not to be discarded

Just because it is a palm leaf book, it need not be discarded. The best course would be to see if there is any additional evidence to corroborate the palm leaf text and base the judgment on it.

Scheme of Venkatachala Itihas Mala

S.Krishna Swami Aiyangar had to say:

"Of the seven divisions of the work, Sri Venkatachala Itihas Mala, the first three sections or Stabakas, as they are called, are concerned with the discussion as to the Vaishnava character of the image. The remaining four stabakas are taken up with what Ramanuja did for the temple, and, after him, his disciple Anantraya. Since the inscriptions of the next following century do mention the gardens and other features named after Ramanuja and Anantraya, we may take it that Ramanuja's doings there and Anantaraya's presence are matters which need not be regarded as historically doubtful..." [Aiyangar: I,150]

Activities of Ramanuja as mentioned in VIM.

The following are some of the important actions done by Ramanuja, as given in the Itihas Mala. [Aiyangar: I,150]

He published the Yadavaraja's award that the shrine was a Vishnu shrine, performed the initial purificatory rite of the great ablution of the temple and restored the rituals of worship as per Vaikhanasa Agama, repaired the tower over the temple, according to Vaikhanasa Agama, put around the neck of the God, a necklet of image of Padmavati, arranged weekly ablutions, and face mark Urdhwa Pundra.

He performed purificatory cermony of Vaishnava initiation to descendants of early Vaikhanasa priest Bhimbhadra and entrusted them the work of worship. He installed images of Alvaras at the foot of the hill in shrine of Govindaraja. He built temple of Govindaraja at the foot of the hill, got made from Yadavraja an Agrahara round this temple and Tirupati. Nambi and Anantraya were invited to reside at lower Tirupati.

He installed image of Goda, and started two new festivals, **restored two wells and got divine sanction for use of this water.** He arranged for gold Naga jewels on both hands of Lord and made Narashimha shrine within the walls of temple.

He arranged for footmarks of the Lord, halfway up the hill, and made ita place of worship as even the chandalas were allowed to go there and offer worship after bath in a tank called *Chandala Tirtha.* He installed images of Rama and Sita, enforced the worship of Varaha to thake place before that of Venkatesa and arranged for garlands to Vishvakshena.

After Tirumalai Nambi passed away, Ramanuja instituted a festival in his honour, made regulations about stay at Tirupati, appointed a bachelor superintendent and during his last visit, he gave 2 or 3 assistants to the Superintendent from disciples of Anantraya, advised Yadavraja to see to the affairs of the temple according to the advice of Anantraya and left finally for Srirangam.

Time of Ramanuja's visit

S.Krishnaswami Aiyangar observes:

"...the Venkatachala Itihas Mala states that while Ramanuja was still in Tirupati, news of removal of images of Govindaraja in the Govindaraja shrine in Chidambaram reached Tirupati. ...For this event a precise dating is possible... So about 1135 A.D.ought to be the time ...(from three separated works of the poet Ottakhuttar.)" [Aiyangar: I,144]

Yadavaraya, who heard Vaishnava's case was Ghattideva

"...we may take it safely that it was this Ghattideva, the feudatory of both Vikrama Chola and Kulottunga II,that was actually the Yadavaraya who called in the assistance of Ramanuja to settle the dispute in the Tirupati temple. ..." [Aiyangar: I,146]

Fear of Saivite Chola monarchs claimed to be cause of absence of inscriptions

Though all these works were done by Yadavaraya in consulatation with Ramanuja, he did not put any inscriptions. Why? We are told:

"...as he might have felt such a thing might have been displeasing to the sovereign, who showed himself to be an enthusiastic follower of Saivism personally, and what is really more, what he did to the Vishnu temple both at Tirupati on the hill, and the town below, were acts which might have been regarded as going against some of the acts of suzerain...the Yadavaraya felt shy that these acts of his may not be actively approved at the headquarters. ..." [Aiyangar: I,147]

Account in VIM.is well corroborated by inscriptions

That Dr.S.Krishna Aiyangar observes:

"...the details given in the Sri Venkatachala Itihas Mala, which though compiled laterseems more or less to reflect the actual existing institutions in the temple since then. That Ramanuja was there as well as Anandalvar, and that the principal flower garden made by Anandalvar was given the name Ramanuja, appear in evidence in inscriptions just a few generations, two or three, after Ramanuja in inscriptional just a few generations, two or three, after Ramanuja in inscriptional records. Full provision was made for the recitation of the Prabhandhas, and the celebration given of an Adhyayana Utsava as in Srirangam. Some of the details of it such as the Tiruppavai utsava on the hill shrine, and the shrine to Goda in the Govindaraja shrine appear in inscriptional records of the Yadavaraya and others. ...? [Aiyangar: I, 200]

Murthi was without weapons before Ramanuja is a historical fact

Not withstanding the miracles, the account of Venkatachala Itihas Mala is thus corroborated in the inscriptional records of the period which followed by a few generations.

Dr.S.Krishna Swami Aiyangar observes:

"...Even where they are miracles, the institutions based on them remain...in less than a century of time, some of these institutions get to be in inscriptional records in parts of the Tirupati temple which may not be altogether late structures, ...The Venkatachala Itihas mala seems to be a work composed at a period much later than Ramanuja, it may be;but even so, it records the traditions comming down to the time, and, at the very best, it would be a mere effort at explaining the institutions that actually existed in the temple. So the institutions were there, whether the origin of these had anything miraculous to support it or not..." [Aiyangar: I, 159 ff.]

Thus it could be noted well that the fact of Lord accepting the weapons of Vishnu, may be considered by devotees as a miracle, but **the fact that the image was without weapons before Ramanuja and the weapons are present since his times is a historical fact.**

Chapter 14 Chapter 16

Chapter 16
Evidence of Alvars

Alvars and Nayanaras

As already mentioned, the recent theory of *'Vyakta Vishnu Vyakta-avyakta-Siva'* propagated by recent scholars is mainly based on verses by early Alvars, which could be interpreted to mean Vishnu and Siva combinations.

The worshipers of Vishnu were called the Alvars, who moved from place to place, singing the praises of the Lord Vishnu and asking the people to join their creed, and advocating the tenets of what came to be known later on as Vaishnavism. They produced the most marvelous poetry in Tamil country. Their teachings about caste and position of women etc. were copied from those of Buddhism and Jainism, which were the most prevalent religions of the time. But they opposed Buddhism and Jainism, and propagated Brahmnism. Their Saivite counterparts were the Nayanaras doing the same thing in the name of Siva. Here we are only concerned with the Alvars as the Lord of Tirumalai is presented to us as one of the Vaishnava shrines.

Alvars and Avataras of Vishnu

Our interest in this study is to find out the description of the Murthi from the writings of the Alvars, and not to study their conception of the Image. **Murthi existed before the Alvars, and it can not be considered as Harihara Murthi only by Alvars' praying as such.**

The most popular avataras with the Alvars, however, seem to be only Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, Rama and Krishna, and the majority of the verses of these Alvars centre around these avataras only. Lord of Tirumalai is praised as any one or more than one, of the popular avatars, at the same time. To know which avatara is alluded to, we have to consider the various attributes mentioned by the Alvara in his song.

'Vyakta-avyakta' is a myth

Surprisingly some of the verses of early Alvars can be interpreted to suggest that the Lord of Tirumalai was considered by them to be Siva rather than Vishnu, or Siva in combination with Vishnu. These verses describe the image with "long hanging jata" and the "shining *malu*," i.e. AXE and crown, chakra and coililng round serpent. Raghavacharya avers positively that "it is an obsolute truth that the image has no jata depicted integerally on the image; there is no serpent coiling round any portion of body" and "Neither sankham, chakram or Malu is an integral part of the image". [Raghavacharya: II,1126] This is really a perplexing situation for the modern scholars. Some scholars like Raghavacharya tried to dismiss the issue by considering the same verses as "spurious interpolations", taking place during the Chola Rule. [Ibid.] This was the time when Ramajuna also had to flee the area and take shelter in Mysore country, his followers were persecuted and chief disciple was blinded.

The more recent scholars, wish to resolve this by saying that the Lord was always considered as *"Vyakta Vishnu and Vyakta- avyakta Siva"*. Sitapati and his colleagues come in this group. Sitapati observes in "Sri Venkateswara".

"...the view that the Lord is a Hari-Hara Murthi is perhaps nearer the truth, as the image combines qualities of Vishnu and Siva. ...for the Lord has always been considered even during this period as Vyakta Vishnu and Vyakta-Avyakta Siva. The peculiarities of the Lord's image make us pause and consider, whether Lord of Tirumalai is really not a combination of Siva and Vishnu. **The image has four arms; the upper two arms do not really have the chakra and sankha as integral parts of the image. These would appear from tradition as well as from traditional account of the Venkatachala Itihas Mala to have been fixed to the Lord's hand by Sri Ramanuja during one of his three visits to Tirumalai in the 12th century A.D. The Characteristics of the image namely the cresecent-moon mark on the mukta of the Lord, the Jata Jutas or matted locks common to Siva, the nagabharanams and the cobra on the right arm of the Lord, certain other peculiar customs followed in the temple such as worship by using 'bilva', the presence of the Sakteya symbols on the Vimanam of the temple, the fact that a Garuda shrine came to be constructed in the temple only after fifteeth century are all strong pointers that the Lord has several 'Saiva' Gunas or aspects"** [Sitapati:25, emphasis ours]

He relies on the evidence of Alvars for this as he observes: "We have then the more reliable evidence for the Alvars" [Sitapati:27] So we will now try to examine who were these Alvars and what did they actually say about the Lord of Tirumalai.

Verses of Alvars had gone in oblivion

What exactly is meant by saying that the verses of Alvars had gone into oblivion, should be understood. The poets were non- Brahmins, preaching an egalitarian religion like those of Buddhists. Naturally, elites did not care to pen these down, but the masses remembered the songs and sang them. That is how they were preserved. Later elites wished to use these songs for propagating their religion, after the fall of Buddhists, and they resurrected these verses.

These Alvars - flourished, earlier Alvars decidedly, flourished in centuries before Shankaracharya. The only religious sects known to the Alvars were Vaishnavism, Saivism (Lingam Worship), Buddhism and Jainism. [Raghavacharya: II,933]

The pantheon (of the Alvar) certainly did not come into existence till after the days of Sriman Natha Munigal and even long after Sri Ramanuja's days, having gained country wide acceptance during their life time. [Raghavacharya: I,64] They lived at different times and their works were therefore not composed simultaneously. They do not seem to have been called Alvars in their own days; [Raghavacharya: II,938] The Tamil word Alvar was used as an honour to designate Sri Nammalvar only and for the first time by Sri Pillan a commentator on Tiruvoymoli composed a few years before death of Ramanuja. [Raghavacharya: II,967] In fact Sri Nammalvar's Tiruvoymoli appears to have been the first of the *Prabandhams* made known to the Tamil world. The works of all the Alvars had gone into oblivion and Sri Nathamuni resuscitated the Tiruvoymoli first and the others were discovered later by others from time to time. [Raghavacharya: II,939]

Natha Muni recovers these verses by yogic powers

Sriman Nathamuni was a great yogi, a great scholar in Sanskrit and Tamil, a vendantin and a musician. He happened to hear some verses of Nammalvar through some pilgrims. His desire to hear more of these songs brought him to a disciple of the disciple of Nammalvar, on whose advice Sri Nathamuni being a yogi went through yogic exercise and established direct contact with the spirit of Sri Nammalvar. The thousand verses of his Tiruvoymoli were then revealed to to Nathamuni by word of mouth. [Raghavacharya: II,939] He is said to have been 340 years in yoga to acquire the Tiruvoymoli from Nammalvar himself direct. [Aiyangar: I,134]

Acharyas wrote Taniyans

The greatness of every devotional literature and its worth is invariably summarized in a verse called 'Taniyan'(in Sanskrit or Tamil) composed by some great scholar and expounder who first sponsored the study of the same or who first rescued the work from oblivion. [Raghavacharya: II,941] The greatness of the work is judged by the number of Taniyans and commentaries on it.

"Judged by this standard Sri Nammalvar's Tiruvoymoli stands unrivaled among the works forming the Tamil Prabandham. Besides the Sanskrit taniyan composed by Sriman Nathamuni, there as many as five Taniyans in Tamil..." [Raghavacharya: II,944]

The date of Nathamuni's Taniyan is given as about 900 A.D. [Raghavacharya: II,950] and the date of first commentary on Tiruvoymoli by Pillan is given as between 1100-1130 A.D. [Raghavacharya: II,956]

This is in short how we know about the verses of Alvars. This is how the sayings of Alvars have reached us. And on the basis of such books, Sitapati tries to base his theory of *"vyakata vishnu vyakta-avayakta siva"*, claiming it as history. There are many more commentaries said to be written by various sect authorities, with which we are not concerned. Without any prejudice it could be justifiably assumed that whatever be the tenets of religion of Alvars, the factual information regarding the image and worship at Tirumalai, while reaching us through these processes would have been coloured by the the views of different acharyas, who wrote the *Taniyans* and commentaries and it is reasonable to presume that the verses of Alvars as we know them now, do not necessarily give a reliable picture of the conditions prevailing in the times of Alvars, to say the least.

Nammalvar was denied status of Kulapati because of his caste

About the purpose of asking Pillan to write a commentary on Tiruvoymoli, we are told:

"Sri Nammalvar was born in the fourth caste and whatever may be the merits of his work and philosophy there would have been a **natural hesitation** on the part of the members of the three higher castes to acknowledge him as as the 'Kulapati' of all Sri Vaishnavas ... Sri Ramanuja commissioned his ganaputra Sri Tirukkurukaippiran Pillan (the younger son of his uncle Sri Tirumalai Nambi) to write this commentary. ..." [Raghavacharya: II,948]

Modern examples of discrimination

It may be noted that Raghavacharya calls the hesitation "natural". The tendency of caste discrimination continues even in modern times. For example, when Dr. Ambedkar was trying for "Hindu Code Bill", which was to remove the injustice on Hindu women, Jereshastri the then Shankarachrya of Sankeswara Pitha, wrote:

"... Milk or Ganges water may be holy, but if it comes through a *nallah* or a gutter, it can not be considered sacred. Similarly, the 'Dharmasastra' howsoever it may be authentic, it can not be considered authentic because it has come from a 'Mahar' like Dr. Ambedkar. Ambedkar is a scholar, it is said that his study of scriptures is great, but he is an *'antyaja'*. **How can the Ganga of Scriptures comming from the nallah of Ambedkar be holy?** It must be discardable like milk comming from the gutter..."

Quoting this passage from '*Nav Bharat*', daily, 21 Jan. 1950, Yashwant Manohar observes, even the women for whose liberation was this Bill opposed it. We see today these women participating in hindutwavadi organizations. They opposed Mandal Commission, and they still oppose the reservation of OBC and other women, however, they demand right to priesthood. [Yashwant Manohar:, 1999: p.73]

The other reason of Commentry

The other reason for this commentary is given by Bhandarkar as follwos:

"... The necessity for such a work was felt by the leaders of the Vaishnava faith, since they found it not possible to maintain this doctrine of Bhakti or love in the face of the theory of Advaita or Monism of spirit set up by Shankaracharya as based upon the Brahmasutras and Upanishidas." [Bhandarkar: 1982: 71]

Evidence of Alvars is unreliable as history

We have seen that they had considered the murthi as of Vishnu in general terms, which is natural for them. We need not be concerned with their conceptions. We want to know what they said about the weapons in the hand and presence of Devi etc., i.e. the physical features of the murthi rather than their conception of it; that is what matters for our purpose.

The traditional story as we have seen earlier is based on Mahatyams in Puranas. Alvars knew Puranas but not the traditional story of Lord of Tirumalai. Raghavacharya observes that the other names in vogue today like Seshadri, Seshachalam, Venkatadri, Vrishadri, Vrishachalam etc. were not known to the Alvars. These names became more common after the compilation of the book 'Venkatachala Mahatmyam' about the end of the 15th century A.D. [Raghavacharya: II,1091] The Alvars do not mention the existence of any village like Tiruchanoor and the Deities therein; nor Tirupati and the Parthasarathyswami there or of any other place of worship on the hill or nearby in the plains. Even the Deity Sri Varahaswami has not been mentioned. Either none existed or were too insignificant. [Raghavacharya: II,1091] Raghavacharya further explains:

"...Even a cursory reading of the Prabandhams will show that the Alvars were well versed in the Puranas and that they frequently refer to incidents connected with the different avatars of Sri Vishnu. **But there is not a single reference in the Prabhandhams to any of the anecdotes mentioned in the Brahmanda and other Puranas mentioned in the Venkatachala Mahatmyam which assign a reason for the manifestation of Vishnu on the Vengadam Hill.**" [Raghavacharya: II,1091]

Tirumangai Alvar

He is considered the last Alvar. He was leader in establishing proxy image of Lord at the foot of the hill. Raghavacharya assumes that Tirumangai Alvar flourished sometime after 775 A.D. and that he was a contemporary of Dantivarman (775-826 A.D.) Raghavacharya feels there is one observation worth making:

"... It is strange that he has not said one word about Periya Alvar, Sri Andal, Madhurakavi and Sri Nammalvar. They were not perhaps considered great religious leaders in those days; or Tirumangai Alvar had not a high regard for the Kings and people of the extreme South. He calls Varaguna Maharajah by the name (the man of the South) which is not quite a respectable way of referring to a King. The same indifference may have been shown by him to the religious leaders of the South. He did not visit Srivilliputtur and Tirukkurukur (Alvar Tirunari). [Raghavacharya: II,1014]

What Raghavacharya calls 'indifference' may also be termed as arrogance. It could also be presumed that he was ignorant about the other Alvars. It must be remembered that the name Alvar, which was rather an honorific title, was given to them during a much later period.

Worship during Alvars' time

There was not much organised worship, nor there was any singing of Prabandhams during their own times, and it started quite late. As Raghavacharya observes about Vishnu worship during Alvars' times:

"No definite type of worship seems to have been current then. ... They (devotees) had full faith in all anecdotes of Vishnu Purana." [Raghavacharya: II,975]

"The recital of Tirumoli was commenced in 1253 A.D. in Tirupati only but not in Tirumalai. ... Tirumoli was not sung then in Tirumalai; nor was Tiruvaymoli. This was done perhaps soon after the renovation ofthe temple in 1250 A.D." [Raghavacharya: II,1018]

Ramanuja had created 74 aharyapurushas with hereditory rights of succession to spread vishistadvaita philosophy and temple worship, in contrast to sankara's teachings. So non- brahmins were also given seal of authority to convert. However, Vedas were restricted to Brahmins.:

"*While the recitation of Vedas was the monopoly of the Brahmins the recitation of Prabandhams was made the common right of all castes and both sexes.*" [Raghavacharya: II,974 italics original]

As most of the Alvars belonged to Shudra caste, it is said that they abstained form ascending the hill which was considered sacred. At least the reason put forward for not putting the images of Alvars in Tirumalai is said to be Alvars' hesitation to set foot on the hill. [Aiyangar: I,151]

It is however mentioned that each Alvar visited the hill once, except Nammalvar who visited twice. [Raghavacharya: II,990]

We will see what they said about the Image in next chapter.

Chapter 15 Chapter 17

Chapter 17
Description of the Murthi by the Alvars

None of the Early Alvars described the Murthi

The verses from which the hypothesis of *Vyakta Vishnu Vyakta-avyakta Siva* is formulated belong to the Early Alvars, i.e. Poygai, Pey and Bhuddatan. From the zest with which this hypothesis was put forward by Sri Sitapati and his followers, even in World Telugu conference, it would have given the impression to the masses, that these Alvars really described the murthi in such a way that it could be presumed to have features of both Siva and Vishnu. Unfortunately, for propagators of this hypothesis, it is not true, and their claim is based on false grounds. Sri Veera Raghavacharya observes:

"...None of the early Alvars has described even cursorily, the form and the features of the image, the divine ornaments depicted thereon and the divine weapons borne. We have to draw the inference that they attached little importance to these..." [Raghavacharya: II,1093, emphasis ours]

Poygai Alvar

However, Poygai Alvar has alluded to the Archa form of Vishnu in the form of Krishna. Raghavacharya observes:

"...that the deity on the Vengadam hill is identified by Poygai Alvar with the avatars of Krishna, Rama and Trivikrama. The archa form of Sri Krishna which was observed in the Sun's disc **seems to have had neither Chakram not Sankham in hand**. Shri Devi alone was on the chest..." [Ibid., II,1115]

This is clearly an imaginary and conceptual description based on story in Mahabharata and is not the actual description of the Murthi. **It is also clear from the verse itself that till the time of writing this verse there was no conch and discus on the image.**

Tirupannalvar

"There is only one point worth nothing...His impression probably was that terrestrials worship in Srirangam and only celestials in Vengadam." [Raghavacharya: II, 1137]

Tirumalsai Alvar describes Murthi without weapons

He is one of the early Alvars, though not included in *'mudal'* i.e. first three early ones. His account is supposed to be more realistic and interesting.:

"...**We learn from this description that there was not in those days any structure enclosing the image, but that the image stood high and was visible to bhaktas coming from every direction.**" [Raghavacharya: II,1136, emphasis original]

"Tirumalsai Alvar's description is more elaborate. He definitely stated that Deity was standing on the deforested ground ... He changed his religion from Buddhism to Jainism and Saivism successively and at last found rest and salvation by pinning his faith in the worship of Narayana. ... Silppadhikaran which describes the Vengadam hill and the deity as having been decorated with flowers and having Sankham, Chakram **and Bow** in hand **which are not mentioned by Tirumalsai..."** [Ibid. II, 1008, emphasis ours] This means that during Tirumalsai's times, there was no sankha or chakra on the murthi, which was standing without any enclosure.

Description of Murthi by Nammalvar is conceptual

Whatever description given by him, is it factual or only his spiritual and psychic experience, was the murthi of Lord of Tirumalai already fixed with Sankham and chakram at the times of Nammalvar, as can be judged from his writings? These are the questions which need to be clearly answered. Veera Raghavacharya observes:

"...His prayer, in addition to the evangelical work, was to see God face to face; and therein he did not succeed. He sang about the deities in Tiruvanvandur (6-1 ten verses); Tiruvinnagar (6-3), Tiruttolaivilli mangalam, (6-5), Tirukkolur (6-7). He could not rest content without seeing God. He did Saranagati to the deity in every temple he sang. As his desire remained unfulfilled, he sang in great distress and in the highest pitch the ten verses of 6-9. There was no response. It was in this predicament that he decided to throw himself at the feet of Tiruvengadattan. From the wording of the last line of every verse (6-10) **it does not**

appear that he actually went to Vengadam for this Saranagati. But his body and soul would have been psychically at the feet of the Lord. He appeals to Him through Goddess Sri Alarmelmangai who is on his chest, to Him of matchless glory, the Lord of three worlds, to Him whom the Immortals and Munis adore, and He is his only Saviour. (6-10-10).

"Note:- These ten verses as well as the twenty verses of 2-3 and 2-4 distinctly describe the features of the body, the divine ornaments and the divine weapons which the Alvar had observed, ... The presence of Sridevi on chest, the sankham, chakram **and Sarangam** in the hands, the posture of the right lower hand pointing to the feet for Saranagati as the only means to obtain salvation are the principal ones." [Ibid. II, 1151 ff. emphasis ours]

These verses are uttered by the Alvar in emotional tension, as psychic and spiritual experiences, due to his inability to go to Vengadam for Saranagati and should not be taken as denoting the description of the murthi. Similarly, about ten verses of 3- 4, Veera Raghavacharya describes that "He (Nammalvar) describes the deity **as seen with his spiritual eyes in the ten verse of 3-4." (Ibid. II, 1146) Therefore we have to consider that the verses of Nammalvar do not give us any specific information about the murthi, but are of general nature.**

Dr. S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar observes:

"...we fail to find, even in the references to Tirupati as such, references to such details even of worship, or of festive celebration, as we occasionally do come upon in the earlier poets of this group. **Even in the tens specially devoted to Tirupati, the Alvar does not give us any definite knowledge of details which would warrant the inference of his direct acquaintance with the place, or the organisation of worship in the temple.**...This section III is devoted entirely to Tirupati and the details he gives of Tirupati are more or less of a general character absolutely,..." [Aiyangar: I,75)

Sri Andal

A verse from her Nachchiar Tirumoli makes the reference to presence of Devi on the Lord's chest. [Raghavacharya: I,299]

So the picture as appears from the writings of these Alvars, which reached us by devious methods of direct communication with the spirit of the Alvar by direct word of mouth to yogi Nath Muni, who had to be in Yoga for 340 years, is not very conducive to prove Sitapati's hypothesis. Some saw the AXE, some saw the BOW denoting Parashurama and Rama. But nobody saw conch and discuss, the real marks of Vishnu. Also the lord was prayed as 'killer of Vali'. Which Vali is alluded to is not clear from Raghavacharya's account. If it was brother of Sugriva, then Rama is meant and if it was King Vali, then Wamana is meant. Whatever it is, it certainly does neither mean Vishnu, nor Siva. Even deity on Vengadam has been described by Poygayialvar as one "whom the ASURAS claimed as dear one." [Raghavacharya: II,1113]

From the above discussion it is quite clear that the so called evidence of Alvars for Vyakta Vishnu Vyakta-Avyakta Siva is very flimsy, it is a myth rather than reality. It is not only false but misleading.

In any case, the evidence of Alvars is useless in any dispute where a Buddhist claim is involved, because Alvars were quite hostile to Buddhists, as will be seen in next chapter.

Chapter 16 Chapter 18

Chapter 18
Hostilities of Alvars Towards Buddhism

Alvars copied Buddhist tenets

On doctrinal basis the Alvars copied the Buddhists, as Veera Raghavacharya observes:

"... It (new faith of Alvars) copied the Buddhists in this respect and also in respect of placing women on a footing of equality with men in spiritual field..." [Raghavacharya: I,64]

"... Nammalvar's creed is that even a chandala by birth is person fit to receive our obeisance if he is only a Narayana Bhakta. Caste is no barrier. ..." [Raghavacharya: II,974]

But the Alvars were bitter enemies of Buddhists, and we have to understand that in the controversy about the nature of murthi of Lord of Tirumalai, as far as Buddhists are concerned, the evidence of Alvars is of no use, for a simple reason that these were the most hostile people towards Buddhism.

Alvars and Nayanaras were hostile towards the Buddhists

Shri Sarma speaks of this hostility as follows:

"While Kumarila and Sankara fought Buddhism on the ground of *karma* and *jnana* respectively, the Vaishnavite and Saivite saints of Southern India fought it on the ground of *Bhakti* and vanquished it. It is said that **they sang Buddhism and Jainism out** of their provinces. There is a legend that the Saivite saint Jnanasambandar, the opponent of Jainism, had a friendly meeting with the Vaishnavite saint, Tirumangai Alvar, the opponent of Buddhism, at Shiyali in Tanjore District. We are told that the Vaishnavite saint at first refused to set foot in the town which had no temple of Vishnu and that the Saivite saint met his objection by informing him that an old image of Vishnu taken out of a temple which had fallen into disuse was being regularly worshipped in the house of a priest in Shiyali." [Sarma, D.S., *Hinduism through the ages*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, pp.33 ff.

On this legend Prof. Nilakantha Sastri comments:

"Impossible as history, this beautiful legend enshrines the belief in the common mission of Saivism and Vaishnavism entertained by the Tamil Vaishnavas of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In stemming the strong current of antivedic heresy, the Alvars and Nayanaras had labourd together in the past and what was more natural for their successors than to bring together the great Saiva antagonist of Jainism and the equally great Vaishnava opponent of Buddhism." [K.A.N. Sastri: 426]

Tirumanagai Alvar

"...He was the petty chieftain of Alinadu in Tanjore district who, legend says, became a highway man in order to carry off and marry the daughter of a Vaishnavite doctor of higher caste, for whom he also changed his religion. He is said to have stolen a solid golden image of Buddha from a monastery in Nagapatam to pay for renovating the temple of Srirangam ... His hymns, and they are equally full of good poetry and attacks on Jainism and Buddhism..." [Ibid.:426]

Tirumalsai Alvar

"He says, in the course of one of his works, that the 'Sramanas are ignorant men, while the Buddhas are under a delusion; while those that have fallen into to Siva are of comparatively inferior intellect. Those who will not worship the fragrant feet of Vishnu are indeed inferior people.' This put in another form in the traditional account in a fugitive verse, where the Alvar himself is made to say 'We learnt the teaching of Sakya (Buddha); we learnt the teaching of Jina; we learnt the Agamas taught by Sankar; but as good luck would have it, we have resolved to devote ourselves to Vishnu of dark colour and the red eye, and thus put ourselves beyond harm's reach. There is nothing therefore that is impossible for us." [Aiyangar: I,53]

Nammalvar

Even Nammalvar, who was denied status of Kulapati only because of his low caste, inaugurated his campaign of evangelical work and addressed himself to Saivites, Lingaits, Jains and Buddhists. [Raghavacharya: II,1149] How Lingaits are mentioned before the period of Basavesvara is rather surprising. Even a person like Nammalvar who was a victim of caste system, rejoiced the fall of Buddhist seats in the following terms:

"...He says that 'Kali yugam has ended and Krita yugam has set in; Yama has no more work and the angels of the Lord are come and are dancing in ecstasy because the heretical seats have been destroyed. May this gain in strength and glory.' He found that Vishnu bhaktas had grown in numbers and in strength." [Raghavacharya: II,1149]

A nice example indeed of a slave enjoying his slavery, and a prisoner guarding the prison gates himself.

From all the above evidences, it would be quite clear that the Alvars were quite hostile to Buddhists, they did what ever was in their power to uproot Buddhism from this land, even going to the extent of committing a theft of a golden image of Buddha. (what a great saintly attitude!) Should one expect them to say that Lord of Tirumalai is a Buddhist image?

Tirumalai was a compromise site

Alvars had to join hands with Saivite saints to fight Buddhism. The selection of Vengadam was a compromise site. The important point that is missed by the scholars is why Tirumalai was a compromise site? Raghavacharya observes:

"...when faced with the spread of Buddhism and Jainism they (Alvars) were put to necessity of postulating a God and a religion which was neither rank Saivism nor rank Vaishnavism, Tiruvengadamudaiyan was thus represented as the only true God who combines in Himself all the Murthis..." [Ibid.:I,39]

Why Vengadam was thought to be neither rank Saivism nor rank Vaishnavism? Is it not a natural conclusion that it belonged neither to Vaishnavites nor to Saivities, it was recently usurped by these people and not founded by them. That is why it was treated as if it was no man's property, that is why the worship was not settled, that is why Alvars postulated a mixed claim, that is why some of the verses of Alvars can be interpreted as combination of Siva and Vishnu, that is why a new silver replica with *sankha* and *chakra* had to be installed, and that is why Sitapati and his friends keep on saying *'vyakta Vishnu, vyakta- avyakta Siva'.* The so called main evidence of this theory, the evidence of Alvars, is discussed above and no valuable inference can be derived from Alvars' verses and the theory of *vyakta Vishnu, vyakta-avyakta Siva* is a false and misleading myth which has no historical background, and it needs to be abandoned forthwith.

Chapter 17 Chapter 19

Vishnu Images

We have already seen that in reality the image of Lord of Tirumalai has only two prominent hands, these being in *Varada* and *Katyavalambita* mudras Originally, there were no weapons in its hands but *sankha* and *chakra* were fixed later on to the Lord by Ramanuja. We have also seen that the image does not fit in with the description of Vishnu Images as per the Shastras and Agamas. Therefore, it is considered by Sri Sitapati that it was a super agamic manifestation and the image was probably made, before the Agamas came into existence. Therfore we would like to examine the image from that standpoint. Images of Vishnu are classified into three main classes:

1.Dhruva bheras
2. Avataras and
3. Vyuhas

As the Image of Lord of Tirumalai is considered only as a Dhruva bhera, we will only discuss Dhruva bheras.

Vishnu Images usually have four arms

First point we will consider is the number of arms of Vishnu image. Not a single image is found in India, belonging to Gupta age, or post Gupta age having two arms. Shri Vasudeo Upadhyaya observes:

"...In short, after the fourth century A.D. four weapons were installed in four armed images. *Vayjayanti mala* was given a place later on. From the same century Vishva Rupa image of Vishnu came into vogue. In Gupta age the standing Vishnu image is found usually with four arms. In all the four arms are four weapons and *kirita mukuta* along with *dhoti* and *chaddar*..." [Upadhyaya: 93]

Two armed Vishnu images

There were Vishnu images having two arms, but those are believed to be of Kushana age. Only five such images are described. These two armed images are not showing any *mudras* of hands but they are holding some or the other weapons of Vishnu. [Upadhyaya:85]

All these images believed to be of Kushana age, are small in size and are transportable. As it is, we are in know of only 48 images of Kushana Vishnu and 39 out of these are from Mathura region. [Joshi N.P.: 1977: 74]

It is clear that the image of Lord of Tirumalai does not fit in with the description of any of the two armed Vishnu images, either of post-Gupta, Gupta, or pre-Gupta age.

Mudras of hand weapons

Second point we have to consider is the presence of *mudras* of hands. Discussing the *asanas* and *mudras* in Brahmnical and Buddhist images, Dr. Vasudeo Upadhyaya has observed:

"The exhibition of *mudras* of hand is hardly seen in Brahmnical images. *Varada mudra* and *Abhaya mudra* are seen equally in Buddhist as well as Brahmnic images. The weapons are seen in the hands of Brahmnic images in place of exhibition of mudras in the Buddhist images. But there is no such thing as weapons in the hands of Buddhist images..." [Upadhyaya: 269]

"...History of Indian art shows that exhibition of *mudras* of hands is maximum in Buddhist images. In the Hindu images *mudras* are as good as nil..." [Upadhyaya:270]

Various popular Buddhist mudras like the Dhyan mudra, Bhumisparsha mudra, Dhamma chakra pravartana mudra, Vyakhyan mudra are described and Abhaya mudra mentioning its example in Manquar sitting Buddha is also described. *Varada mudra* in standing Buddha is described as follows:

"...In the standing Buddhist images, one more *mudra* is also seen. It is called *Varada mudra*. Left hand is holding sanghati, Right hand is straight near the waist and plam is facing outwards. This palm is similar to palm while giving *ahuti* in *yajna* by brahmins or while offering water libation to Sun. In the Buddhist images these mudras were used in plenty in art..." [Upadhyaya: 271]

It is also an accepted fact that Varada mudra which is found in the Image of Lord of Tirumalai is also unknown in Vishnu images. Raghavacharya observes:

"...Varada position is not associated with any of the Agama form of Standing murthi..." [Raghavacharya: I,270]

Also the *Katya-avalambita mudra* is described in Buddhist images as follows:

"In standing images, *Katya-avalambita mudra* also has a place. Here whole left arm is hanging near the body and hand is shown touching the waist. This mudra is exhibited in Buddha image of Gupta age. Mankquar Buddha image is depicting this same mudra..." [Upadhyaya: 272]

Katyavalambita mudra is a fine example of **webbed hand which is well known to be a "traditional mark of Buddha."** [Ray: 1970: 525]

It has been already shown that the presence of mudras of hand in an image is mostly considred to be a Buddhist sign. So much so, a murthi which otherwise would be called a Vishnu, was considered to be that of Buddha because of the presence of mudras as could be seen from the follwing:

"...The oldest image of Vishnu was made in Kushana age in Mathura centre, wherein one hand is in *abhaya mudra* and there is pot of nectar in the other. Other two hands have gadha and chakra. Other images of Vishnu do not exhibit any mudras. Because of this, many scholars thought that this image is similar to Buddha image (Bodhisattva) and denotes a transitional period. That was the time since when images of brahmnism started to be made just like Buddhists. But the speciality of these images was the presence of weapons..." [Upadhyaya: 93]

Ramanuja had accepted that the Murti had no weapons

While on the subject of weapons of murthi, mention may be made, as a reminder, of argument of Ramanuja about the absence of weapons. He had argued:

"...The image does not bear the Sankha and Chakra because Lord Vishnu in his infinite divine grace parted with the weapons to assist his Tondaiman Chakrawarthi in battle against his enemies. This is confirmed in Brahmanda Purana. ..." [Sitapati: 23]

Srivatsa was the Mark of Buddha

It is well known that *Vaijayantimala* and *Srivatsa* are popular marks in Vishnu Images. But it is ignored that Srivatsa Mark is present on Buddhist Images also. Rao observes:

"One or two ornaments are peculiar to Vishnu and they are Srivatsa and Vayjayanti. **We are aware that on the chest of Buddha there is the mark known as srivatsa; it is perhaps introduced here in the belief that Buddha is an incarnation of Vishnu.** ..." [Rao: 25]

Srivatsa on Buddhist Images has nothing to do with incarnation theory, may be that Vaishnavites had to copy the mark of Buddha, as it is found in images of the Buddha created much before the Buddha was placed in the avatars of Vishnu by Brahmins.

Vaijayantimala

About this necklace, which was associated with Vishnu images, Rao observes:

"The Vayjayanti is a necklace composed of a successive series of groups of gems, each group wherein has five gems in a particular order. ..." [Rao :26]

It would be remembered that in the description of Lord of Tirumalai, there is a remarkable absence of Vaijayantimala.

This should give clear idea that Lord of Tirumalai has got more features of Buddhist murthis rather than Vishnu murthis. We will now study the presence of image of Lakshmi on the chest of the Lord.

Chapter 18 Chapter 20

Lakshmi on the Image

It is pointed out that the image of Lakshmi, forms an integral part of the mula murthi of Lord of Tirumalai. It is represented as a seated image in the padmasana or lotus pose, She has four arms; the two upper hold lotus buds; the right lower arm is in the Abhaya pose, the other lower arm on the left is in the Varada hasta pose. [Sitapati: 32]

Lakshmi was a Buddhist deity

The idea of Lakshmi as one of the consorts of Vishnu is so deeply ingrained in present day Indian psyche that, the fact that She was originally a Buddhist monuments, and not a Brahmanic ones. Dr. Vasudeva Upadhyaya observes:

"...The birth of Buddha is depicted by many symbols, in addition to Bodhi tree, chakra and Stupa. In the toranas of Bharhut and Sanchi the birth of Buddha is depicted by an elephant (dream of Maya) and a devi sitting or standing on a lotus. ... In one place a devi seated on a lotus is being anointed with water from jars held over her head by two elephants. **This is termed in Hindu art as Gaja Lakshmi. In Buddhist art this is considered a symbol of birth of Buddha.** It is the opinion of western scholars that the idea of Gaja Lakshmi of Hindus is copied from this Buddhist symbol. Evidences of this is found from the artistic examples of Bharhut, Boudha Gaya and Sanchi. Gaja Lakshmi had a place in Buddhist art of Shunga times..."

Upadhyaya, however, does not agree that Hindus copied her from Buddhist, and thinks that Hindus originated the idea from the Shrutis. However, he admits that **no Brahmanic image of Lakshmi before the Christian Era is found.** [Upadhyaya: 312- emphasis ours] Whether Gaja Lakshmi of Hindus is influenced by Buddhist or not, the fact remains that the earliest archaeological representation of this form of devi is found only in Buddhist sculpture, and not in Brahmanic ones. The earliest Brahmanic representation is at Mahabalipuram:

"...Gajalaxmi ... in Varaha temple at Mamallapuram (being first to appear in the Hindu garb, though the Buddhism had used it from the times of stupa of Bharhut)..." [Bhattacharya: 1967: 329]

Saraswati was also a Buddhist Deity

It may also be mentioned that Saraswati was also a Buddhist Deity and the earliest representation was evident in Buddhist monuments and not in the Brahmanic ones. J.N.Banerjea observes:

"...a Bharhut railing pillar, contains a standing female figure playing on a harp; it may be regarded as the earliest representation of Saraswati in Indian Art. Her separate figures from the late Gupta period onwards, however are comparatively common..." [Banerjea J.N.: 1967: 314]

Even in literature Lakshmi was not related to Vishnu

It may seem strange, but it is true that Lakshmi was originally not related to Vishnu. H. D. Bhattacharya has the following to observe:

"...That Lakshmi was originally not linked with Vishnu may be gathered from the fact that she was supposed to have been bestowed upon Vishnu after the churning of ocean had brought her forth, though a later tradition would have it that she came out of the lotus which grew out of Vishnu's forehead" [Bhattacharya: 1968: 470]

Before Lakshmi came to be recognized as one of the consorts of Vishnu, her position in Brahmanic tradition was not very steady. Dr. J. N. Banerjea observes:

"...The tendency to regard some of the goddesses as indispensable consorts of the major gods, led to the multiple matrimonial alliances of Sri and of Saraswati. As noted above Sri and Lakshmi (regarded as two personalities) appear in the Vajasanniyi Samhita as two wives of Aditya. Later tradition made Sri and Mahaveta the two wives of Surya, one on either side of the Sun Image. This was followed by the still later conception in North India (especially Bengal) of Lakshmi and Saraswati as the two wives of Vishnu, placed on two sides of Vishnu image. Identification of Lakshmi with Durga, Amba, Devi or Ekanasa is also not unknown. Even Skanda's wife of Devasena has Lakshmi as one of her names, and Kubera, too claimed her as wife at a later time. Popular belief, however, made her wife of Vishnu, and in some Puranas his creative

activity; and in Vishnudharmottara it is mentioned that gifts dedicated to Lakshmi should be given only to one well versed in the Pancharatra doctrine. Her figure appears in the lintels of Vishnu temples at Badami and Aihole, and latterly she degenerates into a parivardevata in the temple of Brahma as Visvakarma. If she had not lost her hold on veneration of men, it is because she represents the docile type of womanhood intensely attached to the husband and devoted to his service, and also because she is looked upon as goddess of wealth in the pursuit of which all sects are equally interested." [Banerjea J. N.: 1970: 452]

Lakshmi recognized as consort of Vishnu, only since Alvandar's time

This discussion should be sufficient to show that the devise of Lakshmi was in Buddhist traditions and that the image of Lakshmi found on the chest of Lord of Tirumalai does not exclude it from being considered as Buddhist image. At the same time mere presence of Lakshmi on the chest of this idol does not prove it that the idol is that of Vishnu.

We have already seen in Chapter 10 that even after Her acceptance as a consort of Vishnu, Lakshmi was depicted only with the Sheshashyai form and not with the standing form.

However, we have to consider the time when Lakshmi got accepted as a consort of Vishnu. It was Alvander, who for the first time propagated Lakshmi as consort of Vishnu in South India. [Raghavacharya: I,150]

This raises another question. If Lakshmi was not considered as the consort of Vishnu as late as the time of Alvander, (918- 1038 A.D.) then how do you account for Her presence on the chest of Lord of Tirumalai? Surely the image was earlier than this period. This is discussed in next chapter.

Chapter 19 Chapter 21

Chapter 21
Buddhist Images and Lord of Tirumalai

Buddhist symbols of worship

Having studied the Vishnu images, we might study some of the Buddhist images, with advantage. As is well known, the Buddhist pantheon is very, it is neither possible to go into detail, nor it is necessary for our purpose.

Before the the image of Buddha came into existence, various symbols were worshipped: These were:

1. White elephant, symbolizing birth of Lord Buddhda - dream of Maya.

2. Lotus denoting walking of Buddha immediately after birth when seven steps were taken by Him and a lotus grew under each step.

3. Horse, denoting Maha-abhi-nishkraman

4. Bodhi Tree, denoting Enlightenment

5. Vajra Asana, denoting Enlightenment

6. Gandha Kuti, denoting His cottage

7. Begging Bowl

8. Ushnisha i.e. Head gear

9. Prabha Mandal

10. Dhamma Chakra

11. Foot Prints

12. Tri Ratna, denoting Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.

Demand for Buddhist art was greater

The image of Buddha was made at the beginning of Christian Era. In the third regnal year of Kanishka, a huge Buddha image was installed at Sarnath by Bhikshu Bala, and is labeled as Bodhisattva. [N.P.Joshi:364,marathi]

The controversy whether the first Buddha image was made in Gandhara or Mathura has no relevance to our purpose. Mathura art of Kushana age and the Sarnath art of Gupta age are too well known to merit any discussion.

Discussing the centres of Buddhist art Dr. Vasudeo Upadhyaya observes:

"...The Buddhist rulers selected different centres and got the work done from skilled artists. Therefore various schools of Buddhist art were established. Schools of Gandhara, Mathura, Sarnath denote a definite art form. For the images of Brahmnism there was absence of usual school (definite centre). Brahmnic images were made at different places. It is more likely that compared to Buddhist images, the demand for Brahmnic ones was less. Objects are manufactured only according to demand. Therefore it was not possible for the Brahmnic artists to settle at one place and manufacture images. During the Gupta age, centre of Sarnath was famous for Buddhist images. Art of making of highly beautiful Buddhist images, full of philosophical features, was on zenith. In such a prosperous age there was no centre for Brahmnic images..." [Upadhyaya: 309]

Depiction of Bodhisattvas

Bodhisattvas are the beings who are in the process of obtaining, but have not yet obtained Buddhahood, such as Gautama or Sidhartha before attainment of Nirvana.

The Bodhisattva was also not depicted in human form earlier, but symbols were used. They were a

caparisoned horse without a rider, with a parasol held above and a bodhi treen with the *vajrasana* beneath it. [Banerjea: 394]

Later on the era of Bodhisattva images followed. Earlier local artists, in contrast to Gandhara ones, made no distinction between the terms Buddha and Bodhisattva, and the inscribed standing and seated images of Mathura, representing Gautama dressed as monk, are sometimes described in their pedestal inscriptions either as Bodhisattva or as Buddha. [Ibid:394] In Gandhara art three different Bodhisattvas are depicted, Maitreya and Avalokitesvara and Manjushri. With the emergence of Mahayana, a mahayana pantheon came into being with five Dhyani Buddhas, viz. Vairochana, Akshobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha and Amoghasiddhi who are said to have issued out of Adi Buddha through contemplation. Each of these Buddhas is associated woth a Bodhisattva and a goddess, called Tara. [Dutta:III,379] For the spirit of self abnegation the Bodhisattvas began to rise higher and higher in the estimation of masses till some of them became objects of veneration. The most distinguished of these, who ranked almost as gods, were Avalokitesvara, Manjushri, Vajrapani, Samantabhadra, Akashgarbha, Mahasthanaprapta, Bhaishjyaraja, and Maitreya. [Dutta: III,390]

Avalokitesvara

"Avalokitesvara is the personification of compassion. He is full of mercy, and extends his ever helping hand to all those who seek him in distress. (Saddharmapundarika Ch. XXIV), According to Chinese pilgrims, the worship of Avalokitesvara was prevalent in India form the fourth to seventh century. The images of Avalokitesvara are quite common among the archaeological finds. Usually the images are richly decorated and show the Buddha Amitabha in the head dress. In some of the images, the goddess Tara appears with this Bodhisattva. The goddess Tara is personification of Knowledge (prajna). She is so called because only with her help could people cross the world of misery. She is also known as goddess Prajnaparmita, as it is by the fulfillment of this paramita that a Bodhisattva reaches the goal. The next popular Budhisattva is the ever youn g (Kumarabhuta) Manjushri. He is the personification of wisdom and is sometimes associated with Lakshmi (=Shrimahadevi) [Suvvarnaprabhasa, ch.IX.Her function is to furnish monks with robes, food, and other requisites.]or Saraswati [Suvarnaprabhasa Ch. VIII. The function of Saraswati devi is to give the power of intonation to Dharma - preachers, teaching dharani, etymology, and of reviving memory etc.] or both. He imparts education to the people, teaches the Buddhist dharma, and is the instructor of Maitreya, the future Buddha. His worship was prevalent in India at the same period as that of Avalokitesvara." [Dutta: III,390]

Literary references to Avalokitesvara

He further observes:

"The earliest literature which may be called precursor of Tantra was known as Dharanis and formed part of the Mahayana sutras ... Karandakavyuha of about the fourth century A.D...is a text devoted to glorification of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara who with Tara formed the chief deities of worship in the early tantra literature. ..." [Dutta: IV, 260]

"The only deity invoked in most of the earlier Dharanis is the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvra, who was a devotee of Bouddha Vairochana. The abode of Avalokitesvara is placed at Potalka, a place somewhere in the Sourth, near Shri- Dhanyakataka (Amaravati). In the *Karandavyuha* (fourth century A.D.) this Bodhisattva is glorified as the first god to issue out of the primordial Buddha (Adi-Buddha = Adinatha = Vajra) and to create the Universe. In this text, Goddess Tara does not appear while **there are references to Maheshvara and Uma, as devotees of Avalokitesvara.** It seems that in course of time this Uma - Maheshavra conception was superimposed on Mahayana and paved the way for the advent of Tantrayana." [Ibid. p.261]

Vishnu or Avalokitesvara

How does the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara or Padmapani look like? In the later periods many forms of Avalokitesvara are seen, but in early periods he is depicted as 'a well dressed figure who holds a lotus flower in his right hand or bears a lotus on it.' [Banerjea: II,395] Some of the murthis resemble Vishnu and some resemble Shiva and there are some which resemble both at the same time.

Nalinaksha Dutt observes:

"...If a careful analysis is made of the iconographic traits of some of them, there is hardly and difficulty in recognizing on good many of them the mahayanastic adaptation of two of the principal Brahmnical cult icons, viz. Vishnu and Siva. The iconography of the general form of Avalokitesvara and of a few others of his special ones has some analogy to that of a Vishnu, and the ideology underlying both these gods, specially relating to their character as gods of preservation and deliverance, is one and the same..." [Dutta:IV,277]

If the images of Avalokitesvara and those of Vishnu are similar, how do we recognize them? **There should be no problem, if the weapons are considered.** Mere presence of number of arms is not enough, there are four arms, six arms and more also in both Vishnu as well as in Avalokitesvara. But the weapons are only found in the images of Vishnu. If an image looks like Vishnu, but is without the weapons, it is an Avalokitesvara. If you put the weapons in the hands of an Avalokitesvara it becomes a Vishnu.

In this connection, the views of authorities on iconography are worth observing. Stella Kramrisch observes as follows:

"...Whether the figure is Brahmnic or Buddhist, Vishnu or Avalokitesvara, the treatment is identical; it has Tantrism for the inspiration." [Stella Kramrisch: 224]

She has further to observe:

"...A Vishnu image thus does not differ from the figure of a Bodhisattva in feature or in composition; **it can be distinguished by its position, only in attributes, and its accompanying figures**..." [Ibid. p.210, emphasis ours] By attributes, she means mainly weapons and mudras and objects held in hand. We have already seen that Lord of Tirumalai has mudras, but no weapons. It has no accompanying figures, which as we have seen should have been there. We have also seen that it is the only "Ek-Devata" temple in whole of India.

Dhyani Buddhas were absent in many Buddhist images

There is another point which needs consideration. A Buddhistic image specially the late one, usually has a depiction of a Dhyani Buddha in the head gear. Almost all the images after 9th or 10th century have got it, except those of Adi Buddha, and almost all the early images e.g. in Mathura and Sarnath school, i.e. during the Gupta period do not have these figures. If it is postulated, that the image is of Gupta period, it could be without the Dhyani Buddha. However even in late stages some of the Buddhist images were made without the Dhyani Buddhas. Vasudeo Upadhyaya observes:

"In Buddhistic art, in some images the Dhyani Buddhas are not present on the crown. Therefore these images are considered as independent ones. By the influence of Hinduism so many such independent Buddhist images were made in the middle ages." [Upadhyaya: 313]

Does Lord of Venkatesvara conform to Buddhist images?

We have already established that the image of Lord of Tirumalai does not conform with the description of the Vishnu Images. In the light of the description of the Buddhist images we will now try to see whether it conforms to the description of the Buddhist images. We have already discussed the position of arms, the absence of weapons, and presence of crown in Buddhist images. We know that the Buddhist images and Vishnu images do not differ much in the composition of eyes, nose, mouth with its smile, chin, ears, proportion of chest, waist, neck, position of legs and feet. All these points in the description of Lord of Tirumalai agree with the description of Buddhdist images. However, there are some points present in the image of Lord of Tirumalai, which need further verification.

Pedestal has distinctive features

It is well known fact the pedestal of the murthi is very important and essential structure of the image. Some kind of pedestal is a must to bear the weight. The standing murthi requires heavier pedestal than the sitting one, for the weight is distributed in smaller area. There can be no murthi without a pedestal. From ancient times the design and character of this has been changing. For example yaksha images of Shunga times are shown on dwarfs or animals; in Kushana times big images of Buddha and Jina are on unornamental pedestal. Late in 1st century the lion appears and denotes the images of time of Kanishka or Vasudeo. In Gupta age two types are seen. One being simple as an Buddha of Mathura and Sultanganj, and second type where figures of Buddhist origion are engraved. For example Manquar Buddha has a chakra between two lions and Sarnath Buddha depicts *panch vargiya bhikshus* along with chakra in centre, denoting *Dhamma chakra prvartana* and also two antelopes denoting the place of it, i.e. Mrigadaya (Sarnath). Pedestal of middle age images is a well known entity of double lotus in Buddhist images. But in Brahmnical images there is the figure of the mount (vahana) of the deity engraved on it. It is noteworthy that both in Boddhist as well as Brahmnical images this principle was strictly followed while sculpturing of the murthis. [Ibid:285]

As per Agamas pedestal for Vishnu images is described as:

"...This figure would be on the top of the pitham or pedestal which as usual is represented as if made up of

four planks one above the other. All the four are shown as bound together by three girdles known as 'Trimekhala'. This is mythological pedestal ... four planks represent Dharmam, Gnanam, Aisvaryam and Vairagyam. They appear in a slightly different order in the Vaikhanasa and the Pancharatra Agamas. But they are essential as pedestal in both. On the top of this pedestal would be a Padmam with eight or sixteen petals. In the centre of this, or in place of this, should be six pointed yantram referred to above. **In the case of Dhruva Beram, the padmam itself is covered over and could not now be seen even by archakas unless the structure of the pedestal is broken up."** [Raghavacharya: I,273 - emphasis ours]

Pedestal of Lord is covered, Why?

We are not concerned with the yantram, but the strange thing is why the pedestal is covered. The circumstances that led to covering the pedestal are not mentioned. Vira Raghavacharya wants us to believe that the Murthi was without pedestal before 900 A.D. He observes:

"But the pedestal itself would have been constructed when the temple was constructed and possibly not before. This statement is based on the practice that the pedestal, the Vedi and the walls of the temple are all proportioned to the height of the standing Murti. There is no evidence that the present temple was built before about 900 A.D...." Ibid:274]

However, this still does not clarify why and when the pedestal got covered. It is just not possible that murthi was without the pedestal at the time of manufacture, as it just cannot stand without some kind of support, the feet of the Lord have to rest on some kind of platform, and not just on ground. In any case the pertinence of covering the lotus pedestal is not understood. Whether it was intentional, we can only guess.

Was there a Buddhdist formula on the pedestal?

It is important not only to see the design and markings on the pedestal, but also to see whenther there is anything engraved on it. As is well known that on some of the Buddhist images usual Buddhist formula is written on pedestal, as:

ye dharma hetu prabhava hetum tesham thatagato hyavadat tesanc ya nirodha eyam vadi maha sramanah

It could be rendered as: For everything to originate, there is a cause. This cause is explained by the Lord. This is the Dhamma of Maha Sramana Buddha.

The scholar who imagined and started the sculpturing of this verse on the pedestal of the Buddhist images deserves all the praise. Because this verse on one side strongly condemns the brahmanical doctrine of existence of eternal God, and on the other warns the Buddhists that they must not consider the Buddha as God.

Therefore, it is necessary not only to examine the structure and figures on the pedestal but also to find out whether any thing is engraved on it. As is well known, this verse is engraved on many Buddhist images. This is seen not only in North India but also in South India, for example image of Padmapani from Guntupalli bears it. [Sarma I.K.: 82]

The presence of this formula is the conclusive evidence of the Buddhist character of any murthi, but the absence does not prove or disprove anything. It has value only when present. Unfortunately for us, the lotus pedestal of Lord of Tirumalai is not possible to be seen, as it is covered.

Jata Jutas etc. not againse Buddhist character

Presence of Jata, Jutas, and Naga bhushanams was one of the points raised by the Saivites against Ramanuja's claim , and as we have seen Ramanuja had agreed that the jata jutas were present on the murti, but argued that Bhagwata mentions Jata Jutas for Vishnu image. The presence of jata Jutas may be argued as a point against murthi being a Vishnu, but certainly it cannot be argued against it being a Bodhisattva.

Yadnopavitam was also on Buddhist murthis

The presence of yadnopavitam on Lord of Tirumalai may cause some confusion because it denotes recongnition of supremacy of higher castes, which Buddhism never believed in. Therfore one would expect that there should be no yadnopavitam was also installed. [Upadhyaya: 72]

Unexplained features

There are cetain points which are not properly explained by the historians. It is sure that worship of **Lakshmi** was started not before the days of Alvander, in South Indian Vaishnavism. In North it was much later. In such conditions, how do we find presence of Lakshmi on the Lord's chest? Was it there since the beginning of manufacture of the murthi or was it carved later on?

Was the **srivatsa** mark on the chest present on the murthi since beginning?

Nagbhushanams are mentioned by Saivites in their claim and it was accepted by Ramanuja, as per Venkatachala Itihasmala as we have already seen. Are they still there? P.Sitapati, writing in 1972, mentions them to be present as we have already seen [Sitapati: 19] but T.T.K.Veera Raghavacharya avers with equal force, in 1951, that they are not there. [Raghavacharya: I,294] Both these authors are intimately connected with the temple.

Silappadhikaram describes a **bow**. Was it there? If it was, why was it removed? It cannot be argued that bow was against Vaishnavism and hence it was not necesary to remove it. Was it really a bow that was described or was it a long lotus stalk whose flower is broken? Stella Kramerisch has described an image of Avalokitesvara as:

"...It (image of Avalokitesvara) is complemented by the bow shaped lotus stalk, from which the flower is broken off..." [Stella: 194]

Third eye

Venkatachal Itihas Mala mentions that there was a **crescent moon mark** on the crown or the forehead. But none of the present day scholars make any mention of it. How did it disappear? How do we account for its disappearance? Is it possible that there could have been a 'dhyani buddha' which was later removed and hence it resembled a crescent moon mark. We saw a story in Chapter 8 about the wound caused on the forehead of the Lord by a stick thrown by a cow herd. Describing this episode in detail, R. C. Dhere, while discussing the Shaivite charecter of the image, suggests that the practice of putting thick camphor mark on foreshead to nostrils, **which was started by Ramanuja, was meant for hiding some distinctive feature of the Lord.** He says such a doubt is justifiable, and that one can be easily convinced that the legendary 'wound' was actually the 'third eye' of Shiva. [R.C.Dhere: 93]

This 'justifiable doubt' of hiding some vital distinctive sign and this 'easily convinsing' cavity need not only suggest the Third Eye of Siva; **it can also be explained by removal of Dhyani Buddha from the forehead, and the observation of Dhere is equally applicable to Buddhist claim.**

All such points require an explanation.

Presumption of Vajra-lepa is essential to explain certain points

It appears that Sri V.N. Srinivasa Rao, had published a book, refuting the Vaishnava creed of the Lord, and T.T.K. Veera Raghavacharya has criticized some of Rao's arguments.

He observes:

"...Mr. Rao writes that the makings of the Srivatsam on the right chest, near the shoulder (instead of on the middle of the left chest as is usual with Vishnu images) betrays hasty and imperfect execution by later artist. He displays here not only his ignorance but the audacity in starting that some later artist interfered with the Murti and executed the work. ...(as peer) Bhrigu Samhita, Lakshmi kalpam... The markings of the Srivatsam depend on the rupam or form of the particular Murti and is not identical for all ..." [Raghavacharya: I,297].

Thus the idea of somebody tampering with the murti was repulsive to him and would be still be repulsive to many like him, because of their devotion, which is quite natural. But this ignores the fact that the murti at one stage was without the weapons but now has the weapons, this is itself is a great interference.

There is a rite known as 'vajralepa', Which is performed for making changes, if it becomes necessary. About the Ambabai murti at Kolhapur, which is considered as one of the consorts of Lord of Tirumalai, such a procedure is reported to have been performed, and out of the lower two arms the weapons are interchanged. [*bharatiya sanskriti kosha,* Marathi, II,110]. Whether any such procedure was carried out on the murti of Lord of Tirumalai is not known. But unless it is presumed to have been performed, many of the contradictory findings can not be explained.

Chapter 22
Early History of Vengadam And Sangam Age

India was land of Nagas and its language Tamil

To understand the history of Vengadam, it is necessary of know the history of South India in general. Though we need not go into details of pre-Asokan period, a few salient points would be necessary.

It is propagated by Brahmanic scholars that main stream Indian culture is Vedic, which is erroneous. Shri H. L. Kosare quotes the opinions of Datta Ray Chaudhari and Majumdar that:

"The main basis of Indian social cultural system is presumed to be Vedic Culture. This presumption is baseless, and this opinion can not be accepted. There is no doubt that, the Indus valley culture played a great role in the development and preservation of Indian culture." [Kosare: 1989: 263]

He further says that:

"About the existence of the Nagas in this country, V. K. Rajwade mentions that *Rajtarangini* describes in detail about the Naga kingdoms in Kashmir in olden days. Astik parva of Mahabharata is related to Nagas from beginning to end. It mentions the inhabitation of Nagas in the Khandavaprastha and Khandav vana situated to the south of Yamuna river. Harivamsha mentions the residence of Nagas to be in Nagpur. Therefore, there is no doubt that in olden days, during the Pandava times and thereafter, there were Nagas residing on a vast territory of India. It can definitely be stated on the basis of description of 'sarpa satra', that there was a fierce war between the Nagas and Manavas for some time. Arjuna married a Naga princess Ulupi. From this it can be inferred that many Nagas were friendly towards the Manavas." [Kosare: 270]

Who were the people who inhabited South India? The scholars think that they were the descendants of people from Indus Valley Civilization. Dasaku Ikeda observes:

"... Study of the Vedic Indus script reinforces the assertion that the creators of the Indus civilization were the forefathers of the Dravidians, who today mainly inhabit southern India. ..." [Karan Sing: 1988: 2]

That they were the Nagas is clear from the account by Dr. Ambedkar, who observes:

"When students of ancient Indian History delve into the ancient past they do often come across four names, the Aryans, Dravidians, Dasas and Nagas.." [Untouchables:58]

"Starting with Aryans, it is beyond dispute that they were not a single homogeneous people. That they were divided into two sections is beyond doubt..." [Ibid:59]

"A greater mistake lies in differentiating the Dasas from the Nagas. Dasas are the same as Nagas. Dasas is another name for Nagas... Dasa is the sanskritised form of the Indo Iranian word Dahaka. Dahaka was the name of the king of the Nagas... Who were the Nagas? Undoubtedly they were non- Aryans. A careful study of Vedic literature reveals a spirit of conflict, of a dualism, and a race superiority between two distinct types of culture and thought...The mention of the Nagas in the Rig Veda shows that the Nagas were a very ancient people. It must also be remembered that the Nagas were in no way aboriginal or uncivilized people. History shows a very close association by intermarriage between the Naga people with the Royal families of India... Not only did the Naga people occupy a high cultural level but history shows that they ruled a good part of India... **That Andhradesa and its neighborhood were under the Nagas during early centuries of Christian era is suggested by evidence from more sources that one. The Satvahanas, and their successors, the Chutu Kula Satkarnis drew their blood more or less from the Naga stock..."** [Ibid:63]

"Who are the Dravidians? Are they different from the Nagas? Or are they two different names for the people of the same race? The popular view is that Dravidians and Nagas are the names of two different races. This statement is bound to shock many people. Nonetheless, it is a fact that the term Dravidians and the Nagas are merely two different names for the same people." [Ibid: 66]

"...the word "Dravida" is not an original word. It is the Sanskritised form of the word `Tamil' when imported into Sanskrit became Damila and later on Damila became Dravida. The word Dravida is the name of the language of the people and does not denote the race of the people. The third thin o remember is that Tamil of Dravida was no merely the language of South India but before the Aryans came it was the language of the whole of India, and was spoken from Kashmir to Cape Camorin. In fact it was the language of the Nagas throughout India..." [Ibid: 75]

Nagas were Buddhists

That the Nagas were sympathizers and followers and followers of Buddha is well knows. Dr. Ambedkar in 1956, while converting half a million of his followers to Buddhism at Nagpur, had remarked that his selection of Nagpur was due to the historical association of the area with the Nagas, who were friendly towards Buddhism. We might also quote a Buddhist tradition from Mahavatthu:

"Nagas are generally devoted to the Buddha. The enthusiastic devotion that our compilers believed Nagas to possess towards the Teacher and the Teaching finds expression in the popular episode of Mucalinda's extraordinary way of protecting the Exalted One during the seven days of untimely rain. The were also among the beings who formed a body of guards protecting the Bodhisattva and his mother. At the Bodhisattva"s birth some Nagas came to bathe him, a scene that had long been a favourite among sculptors. On the Buddha's visit to Vaisali they displayed their respect for Him in a magnificent demonstration of bearing parasols. From other sources we learn how they happened to obtain relics of the Buddha, which they jealousy guarded for a long time." [Bhikku Telwate:1978:172]

T. A. Gopinath Rao discussing Hindu iconography has agreed that majority of Buddhists were Nagas. This is what he said, quite a long time back:

"In historical times, portions of India were inhabitated by race of men who went by the name of Nagas and they are said to have formed the majority of persons who joined the newly started Buddhistic religion. Some scholars of Malabar are inclined to believe that **the modern Nayars (Shudras) of Malabar might be descendants of early Nagas as name within modern times might have been corrupted into Nayars.** The hypothesis is more fictitious and fanciful than real and tenable." [Rao: II,554 emphasis ours]

Prof. Rao, who categorically mentions Nayars were Shudras, finds the theory untenable. It is difficult to understand what faults Prof. Rao found with the theory. At least, I do not find any particular reason to disbelieve this theory. One thing is certain that the Nayars were the original inhabitants of the region, they did not come from outside. Before the Brahmins came from the North and establish 'sambamdhams' with the female folks of Kerala, and thus dominate the Nayar community, the original inhabitants were the Nagas only. From 'Naga' they could have become 'Nayar'. What is so peculiar in this, that Prof. Rao finds, is hard to understand. Let it be as it may, the fact remains that the Nagas became Buddhist in great numbers, is a fact that is certain. Todays Indian society is made up of and is developed from the erstwhile aboriginal tribal people, is a fact recognized by all the scholars. Then what is the difficulty in accepting that the word 'Nayar' might have come from 'Naga'?

There was a casteless society among the Naga culture

The non-aryan Naga people were believers in Buddhistic social culture. During their rule, there was a society based on social equality in India, because their cultural values were influenced by the Buddhist traditions. This social system of Nagas, even in those early days, is noteworthy in contrast to Brahmanical social system of inequality. It is unfortunate that the modern high caste scholars, while narrating the greatness of ancient Indian culture, ignore this fact. Shri H. L. Kosare opines:

"As all the elements in the Nagas society were treated with equal status, casteless social order was the main basis of social system of Nagas. As the Naga culture was based on Buddha's principles of equality, it received the status of Buddha's religion. Thus, Naga culture played the greatest role in the process of establishing a casteless egalitarian and integrated society in Indian cultural life." [Kosare: 256]

"A. L. Basham has shown that there is no mention of caste anywhere in ancient Tamil literature. But after Aryan influence increased, and political and social system became more complex, caste system which was somewhat more severe than in north, evolved even here. ('The wonder that was India', Rupa & Co., 1975, p.151) The period of Sangam literature is third century A.D., This shows that during the Satavahana rule there was no caste system." [Kosare: 251]

Nagas had their Republics

Not only their social system was public oriented, but unlike the Brahmanical system, their political system also was designed to give social justice to all sections of people. Kosare observes:

"From first to the beginning of fourth century A.D., the central countries in India comprised of strong Republics of Nagas. Samudragupta destroyed these republics. About the system of administration of Bharshiva Nagas, Dr. K. P. Jaiswal has observed that their social system was based on the principles of equality. There was no place for any caste system in them. They all belonged to one and the same caste." [Ibid.]

He further avers that:

"There were independent kingdoms of Nagas in South India. These kingdoms came together and formed a federal republic. This federal republic of Nagas was termed as Fanimandal or Nagamandal. This Cheromandal republic of Nagas of South India was very powerful and indivisible at the time of Periplus, i.e. in 80 A.D. Later during Ptolemy's times, i.e. 150 A.D., north eastern part of Tondemandalam became separate. (Dr. J. P. Jain, *bharatiya itihas*, p. 239). This Cheromandal or Fanimandal was a federation of separate kingdoms of Nagas coming together to form a united national federation. In reality, it was a united Naga Nation of South India." [Kosare: 179]

Region of Tirupati was within Asoka's Empire

Coming to the Asokan times, it is a well known fact that the empire of Asoka extended to the whole of modern India excepting the extreme regions of south India. The region of Tondamandalam was included in the empire of Asoka. K.A.N. Sastri observes:

"...it seems not unlikely that a part of the Tondamandalam was included in it; at any rate, a Pallava inscription of the ninth century A.D. (the Velurpalaiyam plates) mentions an Ashokavarman among the earliest rulers of Kanchipuram. ..." [Sastri: 1966: 89]

There is ample evidence to show that in post-Asokan period, Buddhism flourished in South India, and there was a great Buddhist atmosphere all over South India. Sastri says:

"The kingdoms of South India, together with Ceylon, are mentioned in the second and thirteenth rock-edicts of Asoka. The list in the second edict is the more complete and includes the name of Chola, Pandya, Satiyaputa, Keralaputa and Tambapanni (Ceylon). All these lands are distinctly stated to have lain outside the empire of Asoka;but the great emperor was on such friendly terms with them that the undertook to arrange for the proper medical care of men and animals in all of them and for the importation and planting of useful medicinal herbs and roots wherever they were needed. He also sent missionaries to preach the dhamma, the essentials of Buddhism, among the people of these countries, thus evincing a keen interest in their spiritual and moral well-being no less than in their physical fitness..." [Sastri: 1966: 85]

"... The political unification of India under the Mauryas was then very real, and the court of Pataliputra was interested in occurrences in the extreme south of the peninsula. `Vadugar' literally means `northerners', and was the name applied in Sangam literature to the ancestors of the Telugu Kannada people living in the Deccan, immediately to the north of the Tamil country whose northern limit was Vengadam, the Tirupati Hill..." [Sastri: 1966: 89]

Earliest Inscriptions were definitely Buddhist

In addition to these Asokan Edicts many more inscriptions The short Bare found in South India. K.A.N. Sastri observes: [Sastri: 1966: 89]

"The short Brahmi inscriptions found in natural rock caverns in the hill of the South have many features in common with the similar, but more numerous, records of Ceylon, and are among the earliest monuments of the Tamil country to which we may assign a date with some confidence. The script employed resembles that of the inscriptions from Bhattiprolu and may well be assigned to the second century B.C. The later inscriptions may be taken to be of the third century A.D. like the one at the auricular Cave in Coimbatore district. The Brahmi graffiti found on the pottery from Arikamedu excavations may be taken also to belong to his class of inscriptions. They are definitely datable to about A.D. 50 and fall chronologically about the middle of the period covered by these records. These inscriptions have not yet been fully elucidated; but clearly they re mostly either brie donative records or he names of the monks who once lived there. One of the places where the caverns are found bears the name Kalugumalai, `vulture's hill', Tamil for Gridhrkuta, name hallowed in the annals o early Buddhism. From this fact it ha been deduced that these monuments were all of them of Buddhist origin; but it is premature to formulate final conclusions of this matter. New caves and inscriptions are still being discovered, such as the inscribed natural cave at Malakonda in Nellore district [*** 5 ***] and the one at Ariccalur just mentioned. And tradition is strong, as we have seen, that Jainism came into South India about the same time as Buddhism, if not earlier. It is not possible to assert that these monuments owe their origin exclusively to Buddhists or Jains; it is probable that some may be attributed to the one and some to the other...."

"The exact contents of these inscriptions still remain obscure, but a few facts emerge from tentative studies of them. We can say, for instance, that among the cities named are `Maturai' (Madura) and ` Karu-ru' (Karur), that among the donors of monuments were a husbandman (Kutumbika) of Ceylon (Ila), besides a

woman, merchants (vanikar), and members of the Karani caste. The professions of pon-vanikam (gold merchant), and kaikkolan (weaver?) are mentioned. The term nikamttar (members of a guild) occurs twice, once as donor, and again as donees. The word kon (chief of king) also occur. Some words of religious import are: atittanam (abode), dhamam (dharma), arattar (followers of dharma), tana (gift), upasaa (lay worshiper), paliy (palli, a Jaina or Buddhist place of worship), and yakaru (Yakshas) and Kuvira (Kubera). These brief inscriptions are thus seen to bear testimony to the support commanded from all classes of the laity by the ascetics who pursued their spiritual life in the solitudes of mountains and forests. Yet it seems easy to exaggerate their social and religious significance; there is no evidence that the Tamil people in general had accepted Jainism or Buddhism in this early period; and the evidence form the literature of the succeeding age, that of the Sangam shows the Vedic religion of sacrifice and some forms of popular Hinduism entrenched in the affection of the people and their rulers." [Sastri: 1966: 89]

It is rather strange that Sastri places more importance on the literary evidences of Sangam poets of later date than on the inscriptions and underestimates the inscriptions and expresses uncertainty on the clear cut proofs. However, we feel this is no justified and all these inscriptions do give an unmistakable evidence that South India was in fact very much under the influence of Buddhism, and that the Brahmanic influence was minimal.

South India was free from Brahmin influence

About the early history of South India, Barnet rightly observes:

"Even in the first entry of Christian era the south seems to have felt little influence from the Aryan culture of Northern India. Some Brahmin colonies had made their way into the south, and in a few cases Brahmins had gained there a certain position in literature and religion; but on the whole they counted for little in the life of the people, especially as their teachings were counter balanced by the influence of the powerful Buddhist and Jain churches, and **Dravidian society was still free from the yoke of the Brahman caste system..."** [Barnet L. D.: I, p.540]

About Agastya he observes:

" The tradition that the Brahman sage Agastya led the first Aryan colony to the Podiya Hill and created Tamil literature probably arose in a later age, after Brahmin influence had gained the ascendant in the south, on the basis of the legends in the Sanskrit epics." [fn.]

Satvahanas and Later

K.A.N. Sastri, who expressed doubts about early inscriptions as mentioned above, observes about the Satvahana period.:

"Buddhism was well established by the third century B.C. and continued to flourish throughout the Satvahana period; indeed, the first two centuries of the Christian era constitute the most glorious epoch of Buddhism in the Deccan. The stupa of Amaravati was enlarged and embellished, and at Alluru, Gummandiduru, Ghantsala, Gudivada and Goli new stupas were built or old ones enlarged. New caves were cut and additional benefactions made at Nasik, Karle, and Kanheri. In the inscriptions of the time appear the names of a number of sects as well as of monks of various grades of learning and eminence engaged in enlightening the faithful in the Law of the Master. Stupas, the sacred tree, the footprints of the Master, the trisula emblem, the dharmachakra, relics and statues of the Buddha and other great teachers and of the Nagarajas were all objects of worship. The sculptures of this time show men and women in states of ecstatic devotions rather than merely kneeling or perhaps prostrating themselves with joined hands before the objects of their devotion." [Sastri: 1966: 89]

Even after the Satvahanas, the Buddhist tradition still continued to flourish. Further he observes:

"...The Satvahanas were described as `lord of the three oceans' and promoted overseas colonization and trade. Under them Buddhist art attained the superb forms of beauty and elegance preserved to this day in the cave-temples of western India and the survivals from the stupas of Amaravati, Goli, Nagarjunikonda and other places in the Krishna valley; and the tradition was continued long after the Satvahanas by their successors both in the eastern and western Deccan." [Sastri:3]

Satvahanas were Buddhists and not of Brahmanic faith

Because Goutamiputra Satkarni performed the sacrifices, some scholars tend to think that he belonged to Brahmanic faith. This is a wrong interpretation. They were in fact Buddhists. The nature of *yajnyas* performed by him was political. Shri Kosare avers:

"Satvahanas were not Brahmanic, they were Kshatriyas of Naga race. Nanaghat inscription of Naaganika (Journal of Bombay Royal Asiatic Society, vol. 13, 1870, p.311) mentions yajnyas being performed by Gotamiputra Satkarni. The nature of these Vedic yajnyas must be considered as a political act of a Kshatriya to raise ones own political prestige, status and glory as an Emperor. **These yajnyas had absolutely no Brahmanic effect on the republican style of their social culture in Satvahana times.** Similarly, there are no records to show that any other king of Satvahana dynasty performed any Vedic sacrifices. On the contrary, it appears that Buddhism flourished and developed to a great extent during the Satvahana period only." [Kosare, p.167]

Ikshvakus reign

After Satvahanas, started rise of Ikshvakus of Sriparvata, which is definitely identified with Nagarjunkonda, an ancient Buddhist site destroyed under the supervision of Adi Shankara, as already seen. K.A.N. Sastri, observes:

"The Ikshvakus ruled over the Krishna-Guntur region. The Puranas call them Sriparvatiyas - Rulers of Sriparvata and Andhrabhrityas (`Servants of the Andhras'). Though seven kings are said to have ruled for 57 years in all, only a few are known by name from Inscriptions. Originally they were feudatories of the Satvahanas and bore the title *mahatalavara*. Vasithiputa Siri Chantamula, the founder of the line, performed the asvamedha and vajapeya sacrifices. **The reign of his son Virapurisadata (A.D.275) formed a glorious epoch in the history of Buddhism and in diplomatic relations.** He took a queen from the Saka family of Ujjain and gave his daughter in marriage to a Chutu princes. Almost all the royal ladies were Buddhists: an aunt of Virapurisadata built a big stupa at Nagarjunikonda for the relics of the great teacher, beside apsidal temples, viharas and mandpas. Her example was followed by other women of the royal family and by women generally as we know from a reference to one Budhisiri, a woman citizen. The next member of the line, son of Virapurisadata, is Ehuvula Chantamula, who came after a short Abhira interregnum (A.D.275-80) and whose reign witnessed the completion of a devivihara, a stupa and two apsidal temples. We hear also of a Sihala vihara, a convent founded either by a Sinhalese, or more probably, for the accommodation of Sinhalese monks; and a Chaitya-ghara (Chaitya hall) was dedicated to the fraternities (theriyas) of Tambapanni (Ceylon). Ceylonese Buddhism was thus in close touch with that of the Andhra country. ... The sculptures of Nagarjunikonda, which include large figures of Buddha, show decided traces of Greek influence and Mahayana tendencies,..." [Sastri: 100 ff.]

Tondamanadalam was the land of Nagas

About this area, Dr S.Krishnaswami Aiyangar observes:

"...in the age of the inscriptions, Vengadam is generally described as belonging to Tiruvengadakottam of the Tondamandalam...In classical Tamil literature, however, the division called **Tondamandalam is described generally as Aruvanadu** indicating Tondamandalam proper; and the country beyond and still dependent upon Tondamandalam and having intimate connection with it, is described as Aruvavadatalai, that is northern Aruva. Taking the two together the whole territory would be territory occupied by the people to whom belongs the Aruvanadu..." [Aiyangar:103]

That these people were none but what we understand as Nagas. It is well known that the Nagas were the followers and supporters of Buddhism. L. D. Barnet observes:

"...Another group is that termed by the poets Nagas, a word which in Hindu literature commonly denotes a class of semidivine beings, half men and half snakes, but is often applied by Tamil writers to a war like race armed with bows and nooses and famous as free booters. Several tribes mentioned in early literature are known with more or less certainty to have belonged to the Nagas, among them being the Aruvalar (in the Aruva-nadu and Aruva-vadatalai around Conjeeveram), Ennar, Maravar, Oliyar, and Paradavar (a fisher tribe)..." [Barnet, L.D., Camb.Hist. I, 539]

Old name of Vengadam was Pullikunran, land of Pullis

Dr. S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar described this area on the basis of Sangam poets: [Aiyangar: 5]

The name of the hill was Vengadam. Mamulanur the most important and perhaps the oldest poet, has seven poems referring to Vengadam. He refers to Vengadam as belonging to Pulli, the Chieftain of Kalvar, and notes that Vengadam was famous for its festivals. In another poem he refers undoubtedly to **Tirupati as Pullikunran,** the Hill of Chieftain Pulli. Another poem says these Pullis were liberal in gifts. **There is no mention of the great shrine in any of the authors, though festivals are mentioned.**

"It will be noticed that although a number of authors of eminence in this collection actually refer to Vengadam, ... there is no reference to the great shrine...Mamulanur refers to it as Vengadam of great prosperity, prosperous because of its having festivals. ..." [Ibid p. 7]

"...region was under government of chieftain by name Pulli ruling over a people who are described as Kalvar, possibly with a variant from Kalvar. Subsequently to him it seems to have come under the authority of a chieftain called Tiraiyan with a capital at Pavattiri, a little further north..."

This territory was considered part of Tondamandalam. Mamulanar's poem 61 of Ahananuru has a passage that,

"the chieftain of Kalvar who are in the habit of handing over elephant tusks, barter in them for liquor prepared from paddy, and who wore anklets characteristic of warriors, was Pulli famed for conquest of the land of the Malavar, and for great gifts to those who went to him. (Your lover) it is rarely possible will reconcile himself to stay away even if he got thereby Vengadam, the capital of Pulli which is prosperous **because of the festivals celebrated in it.** This is how a heart broken damsel is consoled for delay of her lover's arrival from distant parts." [Aiyangar: 5, emphasis original]

Rulers of Vengadam were Kalabhras who were Buddhists

These Kalavars are the same as Kalabhras. When Satvahanas put pressure on them, these anti-Brahmanic Buddhist people who were ruling around Tirupati migrated to whole of South India and ruled most of it for centuries, and these centuries are now termed by Brahmin historians as `dark age', not only because scanty information is available from Brahmanic sources but also because it was anti-Brahmanic age. They were abused by the Brahmins and their history was wiped out. But the Buddhist books still preserve their history.

Dr. Aiyangar observes:

"The Andhra rulers...had an alternative capital in the basin of lower Krishna at Amaravati wherefrom they stretched south wards, and, perhaps at one time, made an effort to extend their authority successfully even down to the southern Pennar..." [Ibid. p. 108]

"...The gradual pressure from the Andhra Empire seems to have set up a popular movement resulting in the migration of the somewhat less civilized people who seem to have completely upset the Governments of South India and introduced what may well be regarded as a period of anarchy to which later inscriptions refer to in unmistakable terms. This is the movement of the people called Kalvar or Kalavar, and they must have moved down from the region round and about Vengadam, if not from the whole of Tondamandalam. ..." [Ibid. p.108]

Kalabhras fought against Brahmin supremacy and were abused by Brahmin epigraphists after their rule ended

Now we will discuss the history of these people now known as Kalabhras, who were the rulers of this area. Shri K.A.N. Sastri has the following to say about them: [K.A.N. Sastri: 144 ff.]

"A long historical night ensure after the close of the Sangam age. We know little of the period of more than three centuries that followed. When the curtain rises again towards the close of the sixth century A.D., we find a mysterious and ubiquitous enemy of civilization, the evil rulers called Kalabhras (Kalappalar), have come and upset the established political order which was restored only by their defeat at the hands of the Pandyas and Pallavas as well as the Chalukyas of Badami. Of the Kalabhras we have yet no definite knowledge; **from some Buddhist books we hear of a certain Acchutavikkanta of the Kalabharakula during whose reign Buddhist monasteries and authors enjoyed must patronage in the Chola country.** [emphasis ours] Late literary tradition in Tamil avers that he kept in confinement the three Tamil kings - the Chera, Chola and Pandya. Some songs about him are quoted by Amitasagara, a Jain grammarian of Tamil of the tenth century A.D. **Possibly Acchuta was himself a Buddhist, a political revolution which the Kalabhras effected was provoked by religious antagonism** [emphasis ours] At any rate the Kalabhras are roundly denounced as evil king (kali-arasar) who uprooted many adhirajas and abrogated brahmdeya rights; there was no love lost between these interlopers and the people of the lands they overran, The Cholas disappeared from the Tamil land almost completely in this debacle, though a branch of them can be tranced towards the close of the period in Rayalaseema, the Telugu Cholas, whose kingdom is mentioned by Yuan Chwang in the seventh century A.D."

" The upset of the existing order due to the Kalabhras must have affected the Chera country as well, though there is little evidence on this country in this period apart from the late legend of the Keralotpatti and Keralamahatyam. According to these, the **rulers of the land had to be imported from neighbouring**

countries, and they assumed the title of Perumal. [emphasis ours] Possibly the Vaishnava saint Kulasekhara Alvar was one of these Perumals; in his poems he claims sovereignty over Chera , Chola and Pandya, besides the Kongu country and Kolli mountain. His age cannot be determined with any certainty, though a date as early as the sixth century has been suggested for him, on the ground that at no later period could this claim to rule over Pandya and Chola be plausible. It seems more likely, however, that this claim was merely rhetorical, and that he belonged to a much later time, say ninth century A.D."

"This dark period marked by the ascendancy of Buddhism, and probably also Jainism, was characterized also by great literary activity in Tamil. Most of the works grouped under the head, 'The Eighteen Minor works' were written during this period as also the Silappadhikaran, Manimekhalai and other works. **Many of the authors were the votaries of the `heretical' (meaning Buddhists and Jains) sects."** [K.A.N. Sastri: 144. ff.]

Strangely enough, even the modern scholars such as Sastri like to call this period as `dark' only because it was an anti- Brahmanic age, not withstanding the creation of the excellent literature. This is the psyche of Indian scholars. Nothing appears great to them unless it is done for bettering the cause of chaturvarnya.

Kalabhras were Buddhists

About these so called `wicked' Kalabhras, R. Sathinathaier observes.

"We have already made a few references to the Kalabhras, and to their king Achchutavikranta. The Velvikudi plates of the third regnal year of Ndunjadaiyan Pandya (c.765 - c.815) say that Palyagamudukudumi - Peruvaludi Pandyadhiraja gave the village of Velvikudi as brahmadeya (gift to a brahmana). It was enjoyed for long. Then a Kali king named Kalabhran took possession of the extensive earth, driving away numberless great kings (adiraja), and resumed the (village mentioned) above. After that...the Pandyadhiraja Kodungon recovered the territory under the Kalabhra occupation. It would appear from the brief account that the Pandya country was seized by the Kalabhras long after Mudukudumi. They overthrew many adhirajas and resumed even brahmdeya lands. Thus they were terrible and ruthless conquerors. Their sway was put an end to by Kodungon, who may be assigned conjecturally to c.590 - 620. There are other references to the Kalabhras in Pallava and Chalukya inscriptions; they are said to have been conquered by Simhavishnu and Narasimha Varman I and by Vikramaditya I and II." [Sathianathier: 1970: 265]

"The identification of the Kalabhras is very difficult problem of South Indian History. They have been identified with the line of Muttaraiyar of Kondubalur (eighth to eleventh century). Others regard them as Karnatas on the strength of a reference in Tamil literature to the rule of a Karnata king over Madura. A third view is that the Kalabhras were Kalappalar, belonging to Vellala community and referred to in Tamil literature and inscriptions. **But the most satisfactory theory identifies the Kalabhras with the Kalavar, and the chieftains of this tribe mentioned in Sangam literature are Tiraiyan of Pavattiri and Pulli of Vengadam or Tirupati.** The latter is described as the cattle lifting robber chief of the frontier. The Kalavar must have been dislodged from their habitat near Tirupati by political events of the third century A.D., viz. the fall of the Satvahanas and the rise of Pallavas, as well as by the invasion of Dakshinapatha by Samudragupta in the following century, resulting in political confusion in Tondamandalam. The Kalabhra invasion must have overwhelmed the Pallavas, the Cholas and the Pandyas." [Ibid. p.266 Emphasis ours]

"Despite the various explanations given above, the Kalabhras cannot but be regarded as mysterious people who convulsed the affairs of the Tamil country for a few centuries. Achchutavikranta caused the dispersal of the Cholas. In the Pandya country even brahmdeya gifts were not treated as sacrosanct by the predatory Kalabhras. Ultimately their power was broken by Kodungon Pandya and Simhavishnu Pallava, and Chalukya campaigns against them in the seventh and eighth centuries." [Ibid. p.266]

" The Muttaraiyar and Kodunabnalar chiefs of Kalabhra origin, according to one view, were feudatory to the Pallavas and the Pandyas respectively, and in the contest between two powers, they fought on opposite sides. The Muttaraiyar ruled over Tanjore and Pudukkotai as the feudatories of the Pallavas from the eighth century to eleventh. There is a reference to Perumbidugu - Muttaraiyan II who attended the coronation of Nandivarman Pallavamlla. One of the titles of the Muttaraiyar was Lord of Tanjore. Vijayalaya Chola, who conquered Tanjore from a Muttaraiyan in the ninth century, was a Pallava feudatory. A vindication of the law of nemesis is discernible in the victory of a Chola chief over a descendant of the Kalabhras who had overthrown the earlier Chola kingdom." [Ibid. p.266]

" The history of Cholas of Uraiyur (near Trichinoply) is exceedingly obscure from fourth to the ninth century, chiefly owing to the occupation of their country by the Kalabhras. Buddhadatta, the great writer in Pali, belonged to Uraiyur. He mentions his contemporary, King Achchutavikranta of the Kalabharakula, as ruling over the Chola country from Kaveripatnam. He was a Buddhist, Tamil literary tradition refers to an Achchuta

who kept the Chera, Chola and Pandya king in captivity. On the basis of the contemporaneity of Buddhdatta with Buddhaghosha, Achchuta may be assigned to the fifth century. Thus after the Sangam age, the descendants of karikala Chola were forced into obscurity by the Kalabhras, who disturbed the placid political conditions of the Tamil country." [R. Sathianathier: 1970: 263 ff.]

According to 'Chulavamsa', Buddhadatta and Budhaghosa are certainly represented as contamporaries. The formar belongs to Uragapura [Uraiyur] near modern Trichinopoly in South India. He himself speaks patriotically of the kingdom of Cola and associates his literary activity with the reign of Accutavikkanata or Accutavikkama of the Kalabbha or Kalamba [kadamba] dynasty. The *vinaya - vinicchaya* at its end describes that Buddhadatta of Uragapura wrote it. The Abhidhammavatara at its end also refers to it.

He is said to have flourished when king Accutavikkanta of the Kalamba (Kadamba) dynasty was one the throne. It is difficult to identify King Accuta or Accutavikkanta (Acyta Vikrama) of Kalabhra or the Kadamba dynasty. But the Kalabhras once made a great influence over the Chola territory and Simhavishnu, the Pallava king, defeated them in late sixth century. Colian king Acytavikranta or Acytavikrama who is described as 'Kalambakulnandana' or 'Kalabbhakulanandana' (also Vaddhana). [Hazra K.L.: 1991: 90, 128]

Alvara's views

Raghavacharya, who assigns date prior to that of Sankaracharya, to all Alvars, mentions that according to Poygai Alvar, the Vengadam hill was the habitat of elephants, which the "Kuravars" or "Kurbas" who inhabited or frequented the hill used to capture and tame and also scare away huge pythons. He observes that, the Tamil term Kuravar used by the early Alvars is corruption of "Kuraba", who were residents of this area and also of Kurnool, Mysore, Salem, Koimbtore and the Nilgiris. He mentions the names of Kurubalakota, Kurubalpatti, Kuruba Nagalapuram, Kurumba Palayam, Kurumbapatti, Kurumbharhalli etc. in various areas. He says Kurabas or Kuravar were a verile people, who were in possession of Tirumalai Hills and surrounding area before Pallavas conquerred it. [Raghavacharya: II,1006]

In a nutshell

Thus it is clear that the people around Tondamandalam were Nagas, though the name Naga is now a days restricted to a few groups of people and not applicable to the whole race unlike in pre-Aryan times, but the fact remains that those Naga tribes who are mentioned above were Buddhists, as that was the original area of Kalabhras. Thus we find that this area was under the influence of Buddhists before the coming up of the Brahmin culture and was free from the caste rivalries. It was forming the part of Asokan empire, and consequently had the advantages of all the religious reforms brought in by Asoka. In later times it came under the Satvahanas who were also having friendly relations towards Buddhism. Nagarjuna's relations with Satvahana king are well known.

The local people were the Pullis and Tiraiyan of Pavattiri and these so called less civilized Kalavar people later migrated from the land of Tondamandalam to southward areas and caused so called anarchy and got designated as wicked by the Brahmin epigraphists. And these Kalabars were the same as Kalabhras, and were Buddhists. The whole situation boils down to one thing that during the period from Satvahanas to the ascendancy of Imperial Pallavas and even in later times the area of Tondamandalam was inhabited by the Buddhist people and ruled by the Buddhist kings, initially under the Satvahanas and later independently, and not only that but they ruled whole of South India for about three centuries. And these Kalabhras were termed as 'uncivilized', 'wicked' and by all sorts of abuses, and their history suppressed, only evidences remaining extant in Buddhist books, i.e. whatever was left of these books. The real bone of contention seems to be that they cancelled the rights of the Brahmins from the *brahmdeya* villages, i.e. the villages gifted to Brahmins.

Presence of Festivals but absence of Murthi is against it being a Brahmanic shrine

That there was no deity in Vengadam in Sangam age, is agreed by all scholars. Veera Raghavacharya has the following to observe:

"Vengadam or (Tiruvengadam) is the name of the hill according to the Tamil grammar Tolkappiyam. The Sangam poet Mamulanur gives the same name to the Hill. But the name of the deity Tiruvengadamudiyam (or any variant thereof) is not mentioned by either of the above; nor is the existence of any temple for any other deity mentioned. ..." [Raghavacharya: I,106]

It is quite clear that Murthi was absent but festivals existed on the hill during the Mamulanar's time which is considered to be in 2nd century A.D. The festivals always are held at the places where some religious activity is taking place. The people meet and transact secular business activities and enjoy merry making, but always the nucleus is the religious object, around which all other activities are centered. It is impossible to believe that the people would undertake the hazardous journey to Tirumalai only for secular purposes of

barter etc. and if the festivals were taking place, the have to be for something sacred. If there was no murthi on the Vengadam hill, what was that object which was venerated and in whose honour the festivals were celebrated? Certainly, the worship of Vishnu cannot be performed when there is no murthi of Vishnu. It is, therefore, certain that the festivals on the hill were not connected with worship of Vishnu in any form.

These festivals are referred to by Tirumalsai as *Ona Vilavu* meaning "Sravana Festivals" [Aiyangar: 11]. It is worth mentioning that *Sravana* Festivals are a well known Buddhist entity. Lord Buddha delivered His first sermon at Sarnath on *Ashadha* full moon day and went into *varshawasa* from next day, which was Monday, being 1st day of *Sravana*. In North India, months end on full-moon day. There used to be festivals in *Sravana* all over the Buddhist places. People considered it meritorious to visit these festivals on these days, listen to the sermons of Bhikkus, observe *uposatha*, offer food to bhikkus before having meals themselves, [Dharma Rakshita:1956:21] and also to become *shramner* or *shramneri* on these occasions. Such practices are common in Buddhist countries even now and the month of *Sravana* is considered as auspicious. Therefore, the presence of "Sravana Festivals", without the presence of any image, on the hazardous hill, in the midst of the Buddhist Tribal inhabitants can have only the Buddhist meanings. This period of *Varshavas* had tremendous effect on Indian population, and we find, even now, the lay people refrain themselves from eating meat and other forbidden objects of food during this period, and observe fasts on Mondays.

Murthi came into existence during Buddhist rule

It is already shown that the Murthi is that of Avalokitesvara. In about 2nd century A.D., fairs and festivals existed but no deity. This gives us the approximate time of installation of the Murthi between 3rd to 5th century. This would also agree with the times of Kalabhras, proving thereby that the murthi came into existence during the period when Kalabhras were ruling the area around Tondamandalam, during so called 'dark age' - dark age for Brahmanism.

Puranic Tondaman is a myth

Traditional story of Tondaman is already mentioned. The contention of Aiyangar, seen in Chapter 8, is that the Tondaman Chakravarthy of Puranas was a historical person and that he installed the Murthi and built a small temple for the Lord, and this was in the times around beginning of Christian era. He identifies this Puranic Tondaman with Tondaman Tiraiyan of Pavattiri and has averred that he is different from Tondaman Ilam Tiraiyan of Kanchi. Tiraiyan means men of sea. He observes:

"...We found that the region dependent upon Vengadam or Tirupati changing hands from the Kalvar chieftain Pulli and passing into the possession of the Tondaman chieftains before the time of the great Pandyan victor at Talaiyalanganam, from reference to Sangam literature. This very literature gives us a Tondaman, ruling from his northern capital at Pavattiri, Reddipalem in the Gudur Taluk, and held rule over the northern Tondamandalam. We have referred rather more elaborately to another Tondaman that the literature knows of, namely, the Tondaman Ilam Tiraiyan. So we seem to have now three Tondamans before us, the Tondaman or the Tondaman Chakravarthi referred to in the Puranas, the Tiraiyan of Pavattiri or northern Tondamandalam and Tondaman Ilam Tiraiyan of Kanchi..." [Aiyangar:I,22]

Tondaman Ilam Tiraiyan of Kanchi, he observes, was "a great celebrity in Tamil literature...The Tolkappiyam,...classes him as of royal descent, but not of monarchical standing. He is regarded as the son of a Chola ruler (from a Naga Princess)..." [Ibid.p.11] The story says that the king fell in love with a Naga princess and when a child was about to be born, advised her to put the baby in a box and send it afloat on the sea with a twig of creeper of the Tondai tied round his ankle. This was done and the baby reached somehow the shore and was brought to the king who brought him up as his own child and appointed him as Viceroy of Kanchi in due course, from where he was ruling over whole of Tondamandalam. [Ibid. p.13]

Tiraiyan of Pavattiri and Ilam Tiraiyan were different from each other, [Ibid. p.23] and the Tondaman Raja of Puranas is distinct from Tondaman Ilam Tiraiyan can be seen from "...The Perumban-arruppadi which gives specific details regarding the Tondaman Ilam Tiraiyan and mentions the Vishnu temple at Vekha at Kanchi, **makes no mention whatsoever of Tirupati,** nor of Ilam Tiriyan's association with Tirupati. This omission on the part of Ilam Tiraiyan is significant, and stands against an identification between the two..." [Ibid. p.23]

The attempts to connect the Tondaman Raja of Puranas with the celebrities from Sangam era are unjustifiable because firstly there was no murthi at that time as agreed by all scholars and secondly the prayer of Tondaman to wear the weapons invisibly, as mentioned in later Puranas, indicates that **this Puranic story mentioning the absence of weapons is definitely a later introduction to justify the absence of weapons.** Around the beginning of Christian Era, the Buddhists cults were the only cults in vogue in South India and the area concerned was a predominantly Buddhist area, therefore it is more logical that this cult started in Vengadam was a Buddhist cult.

It is clear that the Kalvar chieftains Pullis and Tiraiyans of Pavattiri are people of one and the same stock, i.e. of Kalabharakula, as already seen. They were all Buddhists and they migrated south wards and uprooted various kings. There was religious animosity with Brahmins, villages gifted to whom were cancelled by them and consequently they were abused by Brahmin epigraphists. In spite of all this it seems Brahmins could not get rid of the name of Tondaman who finds a place in the Puranas as founder of Tirupati. We have to remember that Pullis, Tiraiyans, Tondamans represent people rather than individuals, and that all these people being the same, one could see how Tondaman is designated as 'Chakravarthi' when in story itself he was described as no more than a small chieftain. At the same time, the Kalabhras who were the same people, when they uprooted various kings and convulsed the great Emperors for centuries, are designated as 'wicked', 'kali-asar' etc. simply because they had to depict these people in the first place as devotees of Brahmanism and in the second place as enemies of Brahmanism. Such is the mentality and scholarship of our elites.

Chapter 21 Chapter 23

Chapter 23
Emperuman : Buddha or Vishnu

Among the other murthis, one of the important ones is the silver replica of the Lord called Bhoga Srinivasa or Manavalapperumal. In this murthi, the sankha and chakra are not detachable unlike in the mula murthi. It was consecrated in the snapana mandapa "by keeping open a power line consisting of gold and silver cords in between Mula murthi and Bhoga murthi. the power line exists to this day." The date of this consecration is worked out by scholars to be 966 A.D. from the inscriptional sources. The worship was not regular before this Murthi was installed. It is only since this was installed, the puja started regularly, which was a significant development.

Name in subscription changed from Emperuman to Vishnu

Veer Raghavacharya, has pointed out the changes that took place around that time. He observes:

"We also learn from a comparison of the closing words in inscriptions No.4,12 and 8 volume I that the worshipers of Vishnu down to the year 936 A.D. styled themselves as Emperumandiyar. Thereafter they came to be called SriVaishnavas. *SriVaishnava Rakshai* became the subscription in all later inscriptions. The significance and implication of this change would be apparent to all."

"Before the days of Sri Alvandar, Vaishnavas did not form and organized community, but only individuals who had faith in Emperuman, (Vishnu) as the Supreme deity. **Sri Devi was not considered as being coequal to Vishnu.** It was Sri Alvandar who first made it an essential article of faith that Sri and Vishnu should be worshipped together and as forming one entity. Vishnu worshipers who did not subscribe to this doctrine such as Dvaitins are only Vaishnavas. And not Sri Vaishnavas." fn.

About other inscriptions, he says:

"It is not clear whether emperumandiyars refers to some agency, which looked after the due performance of the charity. In the inscription we are now considering (I,12 of 935 A.D., the inscription closes with the expression "Emperumandiyar Rakshai", who are therefore expected to protect the trust. This term obviously intended to denote those who were devotees of Emperuman, whether Vishnu in general, or the particular deity Tiruvenkatupperuman. This term marks one phase in the history of Vaishnavism. We will see that a quarter of century later, this phrase yields place to "Shri Vaishnava Rakshai" when Samavai consecrated the silver idol of Manavalaperumal in the Vengadam Temple in 966 A.D..." [Raghavacharya: 116]

Emperuman could mean Buddha

These are very important observations in understanding the events around that time. All the inscriptions before 966 A.D. have got the concluding part of the inscription as Emperumandiyar Rakshai and not as Sri Vaishnava Rakshai, but after or around the time of installation of Bhoga Srinivasa, this name was changed by the Brahmins to Sri Vaishnava Rakshai. Any inscription bearing the words Emperumandiyar Rakshai is always considered to belong to times earlier than 966 a.D. Why did the Brahmins do it? The situation becomes clear when we consider that the word Emperuman need not necessarily mean Vishnu. The word Emperuman could be equally applicable to Lord Buddha, as were the words 'Bhagavat' and 'Hari' originally applied to Buddha. The difference between the Vaishnavas and Sri Vaishnavas is explained by Raghavacharya to be due to Lakshmi, but what was the difference between Vaishnavas and the Emperumandiyar, and why this change was necessary to be made? If Emperuman always referred to Vishnu in the historical times, and if it was a common knowledge and belief that Emperuman meant Vishnu, it would be equally pertinent to ask why the name was changed to Sri Vaishnava Rakshai from Emperumandiyar Rakshai, if it was not to avoid reference to Lord Buddha, and make clear reference to Vishnu, so that there remains no confusion on the minds of recent converts to Vaishnavism.

Emerging importance of Lakshmi cannot explain the change in subscription

It is clear that Emperuman is a general term whereas Vishnu is a specific term. If Brahmins wanted only to increase the importance of Lakshmi, they have added to word 'Sri' or some of its equivalent to Emperuman. So the emerging importance of Lakshmi in 10th century cannot, alone, explain the change in subscription in epigraphic records.

If Lakshmi was not considered to be a consort of Vishnu till the times of Alvandar, how do we account for Her presence on the Lord's chest? This was already discussed in Chapter 20.

Devadasis were degraded Buddhist nuns

The word Emperumandiyar which was used in the sense of Vaishnavas before 966 A.D. got the meaning of dancing girls, attached to Vishnu temples, in inscriptions of about 1230-1240 A.D. in the time of Raja Raya III. [Raghavacharya: I,118] In Maharashtra, they are called 'Devadasis' meaning female servants of God' In the opinion of present author these devadasis were originally Buddhist nuns, and the system of making first born daughter, a Bhikshuni was prevalent, and the fall of Buddhism caused the degradation of these bhikshunis to the level of todays devadasis.

It is a mistake to trace the origin of Indian Temple dancers to Greek or Egyptian tradition or any foreign ancient customs. Indian scene is comparatively more recent.

About Ambrapali of Buddha's times in ancient India, Vasantsena, the heroine of sanskrit drama Mrichakatikam of seventh century in middle ages, and Madhavi, a courtesan of the epic Sillapadhikaran of eighth ninth century or so, it should be clearly understood that, none of them was a Devadasi.

One has to differentiate between *Ganikas* and their inferior counterparts *Varanganas* on one hand and the Devadasis on the other. That the devadasis were Buddhist nuns can be deduced from many evidences. **They are unknown to ancient India. Jaatakas, Kautillya or Vatsayana do not mention them, but later Puranas found them useful. The system started only after the fall of Buddhism and records of them start appearing around 1000 A.D.** [*bharatiya sanskruti kosh*, IV, 448]

In certain castes the system of offering at least one daughter from family was rampant in almost all families of the caste. [Ibid.] It is well known that 95% of the devadasis today belong to caste of Untouchables, who were of course Buddhists originally. The system was present in almost all parts of India, though in South, it was more prevalent. These dancing girls and their male counterparts had different names in different parts of the country, and the important point to note is that the pair was, and even today is, considered not as husband and wife but as brother and sister, the relation that existed among the Buddhist nuns and Bhikshus.

In certain parts of Maharashtra, these devadasis are known as 'bhavin' or 'jogin' or 'jogtin'. All these words literally mean a Buddhist nun.

There always used to be and still is, some religious rite conducted at the time of their initiation and that they were looked upon with respect by the society in early days. [Ibid.] It is also noteworthy that they have the Deities of their own, which are distinct from Brahmanic Deities, and the original connection with Buddhist Deities is already forgotten. Some of the Deities of these Devadasis are also now homologized as Brahmins worship these Deities, and the people whose 'kuladaivatam' are these deities, are of lower castes and do not belong to Brahmanic order. These are some of the points denoting Buddhist origin of Devadasis.

Origin of Devadasi system is religious and not economical

It must be clearly understood that it has got not only economic facets but also religious ones. For example, devadasis have a firm religious belief that they must not get married, which poses a difficult problem, not only to find them husbands but also to persuade them for marriage. Instances are abundant that these girls refused to get married and some of those who did get married, lost their prestige in the eyes of their kith and kin. This kind of orthodoxy can only be explained on religious grounds and not on economical ones.

Unfortunately the present Devadasis are ignorant of their glorious past and that the prominent among them and their families have dissociated themselves from the problems of Devadasis. They are against any kind of reform and are associating with the very social institutions and people, who made them cheap prostitutes from servants of god

What more evidence is needed?

It is a matter of understanding. 95 per cent of Devadasis are untouchables. Being untouchables they were Buddhists of olden days as shown by Dr. Ambedkar very aptly. Before the name 'Vaishnava' came in vogue, the devotees of the Lord of Tirumalai were known by the name 'emperumandiyars'. The same name was being applied to these women who became devadasis from Buddhist bhikkunis. This is a direct evidence that the ancestors of todays devadasis who were devotees of Venkateswara, were Buddhists and that the Lord of Tirumalai was the Lord of these Buddhists.

The name by which these erstwhile Buddhists are known today, was the name of the devotees of the Lord Venkateswara. What more direct evidence could there be that the Lord Venkateswara was the Buddhist deity.

The moot question is, untouchability started around fifth century, and the devadasi system started around 1000 A.D. How were the untouchable girls allowed inside the temple after practice of untouchability started?

The obvious answer is that these girls were already present in the temples as Buddhist nuns, and when the temples were taken over by the Brahmins, these girls were degraded as devadasis. The subject how Buddhist nuns became Devadasis is discussed in greater detail by us in "Rise and Fall Buddhist Nuns". ["World Fellowship of Buddhists WFB Review", (January-March 2000), from Bangkok.]

Chapter 22 Chapter 24

Chapter 24
Proxy Image of Lord and Bhoga Srinivasa

Crucial years

The time from installation of proxy image at the foot of the hill around 830 A.D. to the installation of Bhoga Srinivasa in 966 A.D. in *Tiruvirankoyil* on the top of the hill is a crucial period not only in the History of Lord of Tirumalai but of Indian Buddhism as a whole because this was the time Brahmnism gained ground and Buddhism was defeated.

The attack of Brahmanism against Buddhism was multi pronged. Kumaril fought on Karmakanda and Shankara on Vedanta, both on **Philosophy**; Naynars on Shaivism and Alwaras on Vaishnavism, both on **Bhakti**; the Rajputs were created to fight **militarily** and the Acharyas were engaged in *shastrartha*, all this was happening at a time when foreign hordes of newly formed religion of Mohammed were knocking on the western borders. The leaders of this country were more interested in driving away the Buddhist rather than stopping the invaders. The country paid a heavy price for it. There was a hectic activity all around, in legislative, judiciary, executive and military fields and all the activity was directed against the Buddhists. This is the time when **Hindu** Tirupati erupted, and the following is the history of it.

The history of modern **Hindu** Tirupati starts not at Tirumalai or Chandragiri, but at Trichannur. The first inscription concerning the temple of Venkatesvara is found here, mentioning that a proxy image of Lord was installed at Trichannur. There were actually three images installed. One was *mula murthi,* second was *utsava murthi,* and the third one was specially meant for conversion of people to Vaishnavism. The first two were already present in 826 A.D. or so, and the third came a few years later.

First records are not at Tirumalai

T.K.T. Veera Raghavacharya observes:

".. the earliest inscriptions - that is, all those that are found till we reach the date of the consecration of the *Mannavalapperumal* in the Tiruvengadam temple - are to be found only in Tiruchchokinur. The only exception to this is the solitary slab which was found as a stray piece in front of the Tiruvengadam temple... commemorating the birth of one Vijayaditya... about the year 790. The year of the consecration of Manavalapperumal as will be shown later was much later than this. There is an interval of one and three quarter centuries between the two during which period there are no inscriptions in Tirumalai to tell us anything about the temple on the hill." [Raghavacharya: I,106]

First record mentions of the Proxy Image

This inscription tells us that a proxy image of Lord on the hill is installed at Tiruchchokinur at the foot of the hill:

"The earliest inscription found in Tiruchchokinur was made in the 51st regnal year of Kovijayan Dantivikramar. This we take to be 826 A.D. This inscription tells us in distinct terms that the proxy of Tiruvengadatupperumandigal existed in the *Tiruvilankoyil* at Tiruchchokinur. ... The main point to note in this inscription is that a Tiruvilankoyil (or a proxy temple) for the Tiruvengadam Deity was built and that a proxy Deity was set up ... The term Tiruchchokinu Tiruvengadattupperumanadigal would only go to show that he was not the original Deity on the Vengadam hill, but only a copy thereof. There were temples dedicated to Tiruvengadattupperuman in other places also. ..." [Raghavacharya: I,106]

Purpose of Proxy Image was religious conversion

Veera Raghavacharya says it was due to the activities of Alvaras and specially due to the work of **Tirumangai**, that this Temple came up. The reason of coming up of this Temple, as he gives, was for the convenience of the devotees, to save them the trouble of climbing the hazardous hill. Indians, since centuries are used to shrines on hazardous hills in all parts of the country, but no proxy image is usually worshipped except perhaps that of Kedarnatha. But for this relatively less hazardous shrine, we are told that it was for convenience of devotees. May be it was so. But could that be the only reason? If we look at the activities of this proxy temple we would get clear picture that the main object was to start the conversion to Vaishnavism. In addition to this the real object seems to be to woo away the people from going up to the Hills.

T.K.T. Veera Raghavacharya observes:

"The base of operation nearest to Tirumalai was Tiruchchokinur as Tirupati had not then come into existence. An auxiliary temple was constructed there and a duplicate Tiruvengadamudaiyan was installed. Conversion of **Saivites** into Vaishnavism was obviously carried on in a supplementary shrine where another image was set up to preside over the conversion ceremony. By the time attempts were made by the Saivites to stem this tide by the construction of a temple for Shiva in the same village (Sri Parasaresvara or Tippaladisvaranudaiyan) it was considered better to transfer the work to Tirumalai itself **by entering into some sort of an agreement with the Vaikhanasas there"** [Ibid. 108]

How conversion was carried out

T.K.T.Veera Raghavacharya observes:

"Regarding the Tirumantira Salai Perumandigal, ... We gather that Brahmins were being fed in that temple. Tirumantira Salai is, as the name indicates, the temple or shrine where the new convert to the Vaishnava faith was initiated into the *Ashtakshara* or *Tirumantram*. It therefore happens to be the place where the convert was also provided with food for the day. The endowment made by Gunavan Aparajitam was for feeding two Brahmins daily, not necessarily Vaishnavas." [Ibid:110]

"In the early days one of the main functions of the leaders of Vaishnavism was to convert the Saivites to Vaishnavism. It is a well known fact that branding on the fore part of the shoulder with the Chakram and Sankham marks was necessary function before being initiated into the *Tirumantram* or *Ashtaaksharam*. He must be an acknowledged and accredited Acharya who can do this. Tradition tells us that Tirumalai Nambi gave his two sisters in marriage only after the intended bridegroom embraced Vaishnavism and went through the ceremony of branding and initiation into Ashtakshara. Sri Ramanuja's father is one of the two. We know that Sri Ramanuja created a band of 72 persons, known as *Simhasanadhipatis* who were given the authority and the power to carry on this proselytising work. But our inscriptions relate to a period which may be at least two centuries anterior to Sri Ramanuja. The procedure adopted at that time seems to be that the function took place in the presence of the Deity in the Tirumantirasalai. The *Sudarsana* and the *Paanchajanya* blocks used for the branding would have been duly consecrated and in enjoyment of the daily puja to the Deity. It is only such a consecrated instrument that would have been permitted to be used for this ceremony. After the daily *Tiruvaradhanam* was over the branding would take place. In all the Sri Vaishnava Mathams there is a presiding Deity and the Sudarsanam and Paanchajanyam also share the daily puja. The acharya-purushas who have been doing this work have likewise been doing puja to some Murthi or other and the Sudarsanam and Paanchajanyam would find a place in the pantheon. After Sri Ramanuja organised his School of Acharyas, there was no need for a Tirumantirasalai in temples. But before his days there were only a few recognised Acharyas; the temple was therefore the most accredited place. Even to this day this kind of branding takes place in Tirumalai by the seven recognized Acharya Purushas of the Temple during the Brahmotsavam.

"We can now have a clear picture of the three Murthis (with perhaps a separate temple of each) existing in Tiruchchokinur at the time of the downfall of the Pallava supremacy and the establishment of that of the Cholas." [Raghavacharya: 113]

As it cannot be said that all these murthis appeared on one day, even in 826 A.D. when these murthis are described as 'in existence', it could be very conveniently seen that the first installation of the murthi at Trichakkanur must have been even earlier than 826 A.D.

Socio-political conditions need to be taken into account

The appearance of the temple at Trichakkanur as a Proxy Temple and proxy image has to be viewed, taking into consideration the social and political conditions of the land, as has been rightly remarked by Veera Raghavacharya, who observes;

"In fact the history of Tiruvengadam Temple is seen to commence not on the Hills, but in the small village of Tiruchokinur (Tiruchochokinur or Tiruchchukanur) now going by the name of Tiruchannur or Chiratanur about ten miles South of the Hills by road. Changes in the political conditions of the country seem to have largely influenced the building of a temple on the Vengadam Hill itself and in the founding of a new village near the foot of the hill by Sri Ramanuja known as Tirupati. The Pallava rule during which the temple was built was overthrown by the Cholas and Shaivism gained the upper hand for some time. For a correct understanding of the inscriptions which reveal this history, it is necessary that we should understand the religious atmosphere of the corresponding period and the political conditions favourable or unfavourable at the time." [Raghavacharya: I, 81]

However, he has described the conditions at the time of fall of Pallavas, around the end of tenth century. Instead, it should be the time around the end of 7th to end of 9th century, that should be the subject matter

of our discussion, because that was the time of rise of the cult of Hindu Tirupati, when installation of Proxy Image was done. We will have to consider the situation regarding social, political, and religious atmosphere of India in general, and South India and Andhra Tamil region in particular.

Brahmanism amended its laws

This was the time when Brahmanism got itself braced to combat Buddhism on all fronts. It made tremendous changes in its criminal, civil and personal laws to fight Buddhism with all might. These changes are termed *kalivarjya* i.e. forbidden in Kali age. Dr (M.M.) P. V. Kane has enumerated 55 changes. The prominent among these changes are those which were necessary to outdo moral precepts of Buddhism, such as abandoning procreation by husband's brother on a widow, considering other types of sons illegal except *auras* and *dattak*, abandoning killing of cows on certain *yajnyas*, killing of animals in honour of bridegroom, guests and pitars, actual killing of animal in *Yajna*, selling of soma, committing suicide by old people, narmegha, ashwamegh, rajsuya, killing of animals in Yajna, and drinking intoxicating liquors.

Second group of injunctions were put on the society to strengthen the caste system. These included prohibition of widow marriages, prohibition of inter caste marriages, prohibiting women polluted by rape etc. to mix in society even after *prayschitta,* prohibiting mixing in the society of persons who have committed adultery with lower varnas in spite of the prayschitta. Some prohibitions on food and drinks by different castes made caste system more and more rigid. Importance of brahmin caste was enhanced e.g. killing of a Brahmin even as an *aatatayin* was prohibited, and Brahmins were exempted from capital punishment. *Sanyasa* and *Vanprastha* were prohibited for others.

The third group of injunctions isolated Indians from the rest of the world. Brahmins were prohibited from undertaking distant journeys, or undertaking pilgrimages of distant lands and crossing the sea was totally prohibited. All these injunctions were imposed on the society with the intention of preventing free association with Buddhist ideas and preventing free assimilation among the castes. Thus Brahmnism started to isolate its members from the rest of the world. The maritime people of Chola and Pallava country, who used to have great links with far east Buddhist countries, stopped their voyages and lost their maritime skill in due course. And the sphere of activity of people gradually shrank more and more and ultimately remained restricted to the caste and to the village or at the most five villages, *panchakroshi*.

These kali varjya injunctions, it has been pointed out by Dr. Ambedkar, are not condemned but only prohibited. This new technique of forbidding but not condemning, which he calls very strange, is a new one invented by the Brahmins, in utter contrast to the procedures followed in earlier ages. This was necessary because the policy of Brahmins was to copy Buddhist on one side and to condemn Buddhism on the other, so that principles like equality and condemnation of Chaturvarnya etc., which are unwanted for the Brahmins could be kept out but popularity of Buddhism could be utilised for their selfish ends. L.M.Joshi has rightly observed:

"In the sacred writings of Neo-Brahmnism one encounters a strange paradoxical situation, viz. systematic assimilation as well as a sustained condemnation of Buddhism." [L.M.Joshi: 1983: 216]

Anti-Buddhist activities were at peak

This was the time when the religious activities against the Buddhists were at their zenith. L. M. Joshi has observed:

"...The views that, constant Brahmanical hostility towards Buddhism both in letter and spirit seems to have been the foremost factor in loosening its hold on Indian classes and masses, and that the anti-Buddhist propaganda in Brahmanical literature was not a mere 'war of the pen' but was periodically accompanied with its social counterpart, such as social boycott and royal edicts against those who violated the 'divinely ordained' scheme of chaturvarnya, and establishments by Brahmanical kings, etc. have been put forward for the consideration of our historians who account for the decay of Buddhism by exaggerating the effects of Turkish conquest of India." [L.M.Joshi:1973:xxi]

Brahmanical Crusade against Buddhism

This was the time, when Brahmanism started country wide crusade against Buddhism. Speaking of this age L. M. Joshi describes this crusade thus:

"...It was the age when Buddhist logic and dialectics were perfected by Dharmakirti and Shantirakshita; when Buddhist moral and spiritual fervour received supreme expression at the hands of Shantideva and Kamalashila; when some of the master minds of ancient India including Shantideva, Chandrakirti, Dharmakirti, Shantirakshita, Uddyotkara, Kumarila and Sankara, were busy in a life and death struggle for

the defense of their own doctrines; when Buddhist logicians like Samkarananda and Brahmanical teachers like Gaudapada were trying to harmonise the tenets of Buddhist and Brahmanical philosophies; when Tantrika adepts like Sarahapada, Nagarjunaa II, and others began to broadcast that Esoteric Gospel which soon transformed Sakyamuni's Gospel, dominated the whole medieval period of Indian culture, and which, through Gorakhanantha, Kabirdasa, Nanaka and others, was transmitted down to Ramakrishna, Raman Maharshi and Sri Aurobindo of our own days; **it was during this most critical and decisive period in the history of Indian Buddhism, in fact, of Indian culture as a whole, that while a host of Buddhist Doctors of Indian Buddhist Universities were engaged in their scientific and cultural missions in distant parts of Asia, their Brahmanical counterparts at home were actively engaged in orgnising a countrywide intellectual and cultural crusade against Buddhist ideals and practices;** when Brahmnism, re-armed with Buddhist arsenal, sacked its rival creditor; when Tantrikism washed off distinctive traits of Buddhism and swept all religious sects of the country in one massive stream of devotional mysticism; when Buddhism began to recede into background and Brahmnism reshaped itself into 'Hinduism' considerably refined and enriched by constant contacts with Buddhist ideals and practices, and remodelled according to the new circumstances brought about by the growth and popularity of Shramanic ideologies for centuries, Brahmnism now emerged, under its puranic garb as the undisputed national 'Hindu' culture. In the two fold process of assimilation and condemnation of Buddhism, the Brahmanical priests sacrificed at the altar of mythical Vishnu even the most historical and overwhelmingly non-Brahmanical personality of Buddha and mystified the historical existence of Buddhism as a delusive trick of a Puranic God. 'This well-conceived and bold stroke of policy,' remarks R. C. Majumdar, 'cut the ground from under the feet of Buddhism which was already steadily losing ground and the ultimate result was the complete effacement of Buddhism from India as separate sect.' (The Cultural Heritage of India, 2nd edn., vol.IV,p.48) **The transformation of Brahmnism or the birth of Hinduism, we may add, had been the eclipse of Buddhism in its homeland - one of the major tragedies in the annals of Indian culture - a fact frequently overlooked or confused by most of our historians."** [L. M. Joshi: 1977: xxii]

Reason for Buddha being given place in avatars, Principle or Strategy?

This was the time when Buddha had been given a place in Avatars of Vishnu, by some of the Puranas. The time of this is estimated by Bhandarkar as follows:

"... Thus Buddha had come to be recognised as an incarnation of Vishnu before the date of Dharmparikha, which is Vikrama 1070, corresponding to 1014 A.D. If the approximate date assigned to the temple at Sirpur is correct, Buddha must have been admitted into the Brahmanic pantheon before the eighth century. ..." [Bhandarkar R.G., *Vaishnavism, Saivism &c.*, p. 64].

Why did the Brahmins give place to Buddha in their *Avatars?* Did they really like His ideas and ideals or was it only as a part of their strategy to win over the masses away from Buddhism? Adherence to *chaturvarnya* was the life of Brahmnism, they could never give it up and to follow Buddha would have meant giving it up. So they adopted Buddha only for name sake. Similar picture we see even today, about Sankaracharya reverently garlanding the photo of Late Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. [*Tarun Bharat,* Nagpur, 18.4.89] That was necessary; Buddha was too great to be ignored. About avatara of Buddha L.M. Joshi observes:

"Buddha had penetrated the Indian mind very deeply; His images had covered thousands of pillars, walls and gates of so many monasteries all over the country, His teachings had been popularised and broadcast through an almost inexhaustible mint of Pali and Sanskrit literature, many emperors and subtle thinkers had espoused the cause of His rational and humanitarian mission, and His praise had been sung by numerous Indian for centuries; He was too great to be neglected. He naturally came in as the most exalted member in the galaxy of avataras. The acceptance of Buddha as an incarnation had been accomplished probably in sixth century A.D. first in the Matsya Purana. The Matsya Purana's verse is found engraved on Pallava monuments of cir. 700 A.D. at Mahabalipuram, where the Buddha is mentioned as the 9th avatara of Vishnu." [L. M. Joshi: 1977: 317].

Puranas invented stories to capture and retain Buddhist places of worship

New Puranas were written and old were edited and re-edited to give stories for new revival of Brahmanism, for supporting chaturvarnya. Sthala puranas and myths were invented to capture and retain the Buddhist places of worship, as already mentioned in chapter 2. This latter purpose of Puranas is not yet properly explored.

Shaivas and Vaishnavas were together in uprooting Buddhists and Jains

Alvars and Nayanaras forming the *bhajan* parties and they were 'singing out the Buddhism out of this country. Vaishnavas and Shaivas were coming together. We are told a story of meeting at Shiyali of a great saint of Vaishnavism, Tirumangai Alvar, under whose guidance this proxy temple is said to have established

and who is said to have stolen a solid gold image of the Buddha from monastery at Nagapattinum for renovating the temple of Vishnu at Srirangam and who is the only Alvar whose image is depicted with a sword in his hand, with the great Saivite saint Nanasambandar who is said to have worked against the Jains, vanquished them in debate and converted the king of Madura and his subjects to Saivism and the story goes that on his occasion eight thousand Jains were put to death by impalement, and a festival in Madura Temple is supposed to commemorate the gruesome event of this day. Whether the story of the meeting of these two saints is historically correct or not, the fact remains that it shows the trend of friendship between the Saivites and Vaishnavites at the time, making it improbable for Tirumangai to set up a Temple for conversion of Saivites.

Examples of Ellora

Rashtrakuta reign had started in northern part of Deccan and they were very much hostile against Buddhists. We find in their reign, the images of Buddha being chiselled out from the monuments at Ellora, Cave XV, Dasavatara being the glaring example. We also find archaeological evidence at Ellora, where shrines like the Kailas were being excavated. Here we find Vishnu and Siva Murthis coming up side by side.

Rathas Mahabalipuram were Buddhist

This was the time when the work of Seven pagodas, also called the Rathas at Mahabalipuram seems to have stopped. The great monuments were left unfinished. Percy Brown wonders why this has happened. He observes:

"From the unfinished state of nearly all the rock architecture at Mamallapuram, much of it lacking that final efforts which would have made these shrines really serviceable, it would seem as if some unexpected political cataclysm had intervened, causing the rock-cutter to throw down his mallet and chisel and hasten away, never to return. History records no such upheaval, so an explanation must be looked elsewhere..." [Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture*, vol.I, p.80].

The reason was not far to seek. A glance at the anti- Buddhist sentiment prevailing among the higher ups in the society around, could give a clue. Kalabhras, the friends of the Buddhists, were put down and none left to protect these people, and the 'monasteries were looked after by local deities'.

Percy Brown further observes:

"These monolith shrines were of Saivite attribution, and in their proximity are images, also carved in rock, of a lion, an elephant, and a bull, symbolizing respectively Durga, Indra and Shiva. Yet the fact **that these Siva shrines are in a style architecture traditionally associated with the Buddhists,** seems to imply that they were a type of structure not the monopoly of any one religion, but had a common origin. There is evidence in support of this in certain emblematical subjects carved within the gable ends of the three chaitya hall examples, each of which is full of allegory. (Plate LX). **And in more than one of them there is a central symbol not unlike a stupa.** Each gable a conventional or diagrammatic rendering of a prayer hall, the curved barge-boards taking the place of the vaulted roof, the decorated brackets on either side simulation the ribs of the vault, while, most significant of all, the central object is a tabernacle or sacred relic. Each of these representations of tabernacles or reliquaries takes a different form, just as the ratha on which it is depicted also is of a certain design, so that both ratha and reliquary may be identified as belonging to one another. It is possible, therefore, that each ratha is a shrine consecrated to one of the manifestations of Siva, its shape being conditioned by the tradition which has ordained that it should take such a form for that particular manifestation"

But Percy Brown ignored that these could have been Buddhist Structures. He noticed and described the Buddhist features, but strangely enough, thought that it was Buddhist influence on Saivite structures. The presence of lion, elephant and a bull reminded him of Durga, Indra and Siva, not of Buddha, though it is universally accepted that the worship of Indra had ceased a long time before the work of Mamalapuram had even started. The observation by Percy Brown of Buddhist features on the structures and to think them to be Saivite in spite of the clear appearances of Buddhist features is unjustifiable. Therefore, it is certain that these Seven Pagodas were meant to be Buddhist structures and had to be relinquished by Buddhist because of anti-Buddhist sentiments all around and though the Buddhists had started the work, they could not finish it.

The structure which goes by the name of "descent of Ganges", as per Brahmanic scholars, it may be noted was already declared by Fergusson to a Naga Representation.

Rise of Rajputs was for suppressing Buddhism

This was the time when a new people i.e. Rajputs were coming up on the horizon, in North India, who were subsequently to dominate the history of India for some centuries to come. Rise of Rajputs is too big a subject to be discussed here. It could form a subject matter of a separate work. [See my *Decline & fall of Buddhism*] Suffice it to say here that these people were made prominent by the Brahmanism, for the specific purpose of suppressing Buddhism by use of force, from among the remnants of Hunas and other foreign hordes who had been broken down by the activities of kings like Baladitya and others.

Dr. Ambedkar has observes:

"...One view is that they are foreigners, remnants of the Huns who invaded India and established themselves in Rajputana and whom the Brahmins raised to the status of Kshatriyas with the object of using them as means to suppress Buddhism in Central India by a special ceremony before the sacred fire and who were therefore known as Agnikula Kshatriyas..." [*Who were the Shudras*: 1970:204]

He has also given views of Vincent Smith, William Crooke and R.D.Bhandarkar. A relevant portion is reproduced here. Vincent Smith observed:

"...These foreigners like their fore-runners the Sakas and the Ye-chi universally yielded to the wonderful assimilative power of Hinduism and rapidly became Hinduised. Clans or families which succeeded in winning chieftains were admitted readily into the frame of Hindu polity as Kshatriyas or Rajputs and there is no doubt that the Pratiharas and many other famous Rajput clans of the north were developed out of the barbarian hordes which poured into India during the fifth and sixth centuries. The rank and file of the strangers become Gujars and castes ranking lower than Rajputs in their precedence. Further to the south, various indigenous or aboriginal tribes and clans underwent the same process of Hinduised social promotion in virtue of which Gonds, Bhars, Kharwars and so forth emerged as Chandels, Rathors, Gaharwars and other well known Rajput clans duly equipped with pedigree reaching back to the sun and the moon." [Quoted by Dr. Ambedkar, Ibid. p.204].

Agnikula Rajputs

On the top of Mt. Abu, an *Yajna* was conducted where certain new clans were created to fight against Buddhism. About this, William Crooke observed:

"...The group denoted by the name Kshatriya or Rajput depended on status, rather than on descent, and it was therefore possible for foreigners to be introduced into these tribes without any violation of the prejudices of the caste, which was then only partially developed. But it was necessary to disguise this admission of foreigners under a convenient fiction. Hence, arose the legend, how by a solemn act of purification or initiation under the superintendence of the ancient Vedic Rishis, the fire born septs were created to help the Brahmins in repressing Buddhism and other heresies. This privilege was confined to four septs known as Agnikula or fire born - viz., the Parmar, Parihar, Chalukya and Chauhan." [Quoted by Ambedkar, Ibid.p.205].

Hiranya-garbha prasuta Kings of South India

The rite mentioned above was called *Hiranya-garbha mahadana* and the king was designated as *"Hiranya-grabha-prasutta,"* i.e. one who performed the sacred rite of hiranya-garbha which consists in the performer passing through an egg of gold which was afterwards distributed among the officiating priests." [Sircar : 1970: 225]

Concerning ourselves with South India, we find that this rite was performed, among others, by Maharaja Madhava-varman I of Vishnukundin family. [Ibid.:208] and by king Attivarman who was father of Damodaravarman of Ananda family, and by Madhava-varman III of Visahnukundins, [Ibid.:225] and by Chalikya Vallabhesvara, i.e. Pulakesin I, of Chalukyas [Ibid.:231] and also by the mighty Pandyan king Maravarman Rajasimha I. [Ibid.p.268].

Ranas of Mewar too

Also some tribal chiefs were among those who were made the Rajputs. Giving example of House of Mewar which played important role in political and military history of India and gave heroes like Bapa Raval, Rana Sanga, and Rana Pratap, Stella Kramerish observes:

"Formerly they (Bhils) ruled over their own country. This was prior to the arrival of Rajputs. The Rajputs, the 'sons of kings', invaded the country, subsequently Rajasthan, in about sixth century A.D. They become Kshatriyas, the nobility par excellence of India. Some of these Rajput princes, including the most exalted of them, the Rana of Mewar, at the inception of their rule , had their foreheads marked with the blood of a Bhill. It was drawn from his thumb or big toe. This was an acknowledgment of the precedence of the Bhils as

rulers of the country." [Stella Kramerish: 1968 :90; fn.:-Koppers,'Die Bhil',p.14].

Activities of Kumarila and Sankara

On doctrinal front, activities of Kumarila Bhatta, Vachaspati Misra and Acharya Sankara were in prominence, in conducting debates and annihilating the Buddhists. We get a vivid description of pleasure of Acharya on seeing the people of non- brahmnic faith being burnt to death, from Sankara Digvijaya. L.M.Joshi observes:

"Far more fatal to Buddhism were the onslaughts of Kumarila, the fiercest critic of Buddhism. The *Slokavartika* shows that he was a hostile critic and avowed enemy of Buddhist ideals. He is reported, both in India and Tibetan traditions, to have organised religious crusade against Buddhists. He is said to have instigated king Sudhanvan of Ujjaini to exterminate the Buddhists. This report has not been accepted by modern scholars as a genuine and historical fact. No other historical details of this pro-Brahmanical king of Ujjaini are known to us. Hsuan-tsang refers to a king of Ujjain who was brahmana by caste and well versed in heterodox lore, but not a Buddhist. This king was ruling when the pilgrim visited the city of Ujjaini. From the *Mricchakatika* we learn that the king's brother-in-law in Ujjaini harassed the Buddhist monks. He beat with blows a newly turned mendicant, Samavahaka by name, and treated other bhikshus as 'bullocks by cart'. It may not be an impossibility that the **evidence furnished by the Samkardigvijaya, Hsuan-tsang and the Mricchakatika - three independent sources - allude to some historical episodes in which the Brahmanical followers persecuted the followers of Sakyamuni** in the country around Ujjain.

"There can be no doubt as to the fact that Kumarila was the strongest protagonist of Vedic ritualism, Brahmanical theology and priestly superiority. The Tibetan historians also record his wars against the Buddhists. The *Keralautaptti* documents his extermination of the Buddhists from Kerala. The name of Kumarila is thus associated with the decline of Buddhism in diverse sources. According to Gopinath Kaviraja, Kumarila 'was one of the most potent forces actively employed in bringing about this decline.' " [L.M.Joshi: 312].

Kings like Sudhanvan, thus we see, standing behind the activities of Sankara. His was not only a doctrinal battle of pen, but it was backed up by fire and sword. Nagarjunakonda was destroyed by Sankara's orders and under his personal supervision as we have already seen. About such activities, Swami Vivekananda has observed:

"And such was the heart of Shankar that he burnt to death lots of Buddhist monks by defeating them in argument. What can you call such an action on Sankara's part except fanaticism" [*complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* vol. VII, p.117; quoted by Bhau Lokhande:131].

Real reason for proxy image was conversion and not more convenience of devotees

Such were the times when the proxy image of Lord at Tirumalai was installed in a proxy temple at Tiruchannur under the guidance of Tirumangai Alvar. It is very difficult to believe that the reason of putting up a proxy temple on the plains at Tiruchannur was simply to provide convenience to the members of public to save them the trouble of climbing the hill. It was much more than that. If we look at the environment as described above and if we consider the activities of the temple of Tichannur in subsequent years of converting people to Vaishnavism, we can come to conclusion that the real reason to provide a shrine at Trichannur was religious conversion rather than just simple convenience of devotees to avoid climbing the hill.

Thus, providing the image at Trichakkanur as a substitute for the image on the hill, was the most clever move by the Brahmins. If giving place to Buddha in avataras of Vishnu was a masterpiece move in the strategy of Brahmins, this move of providing, proxy temple of Lord of Tirumalai, was a supreme mark of intelligence and master brains were behind it. This move did succeed in weaning away people from going up the hill which was the main intention.

Whose conversion was sought

We have to consider at least two points which are important while discussing this subject.

First, who were the people who were being sought after, for the conversion by the Vaishnavas to Vaishnavism. Raghavacharya considers that these converts were Saivites. This could not be true, at least, in earlier times as we have already seen that Vaishnavas and Saivas were together in driving out the Buddhists. The only conclusion is that the people sought to be converted were of so called heretical sects, specially Buddhists. As the Lord Buddha was included in the Avataras, the job had become easier, easier for both, the converters and converts. Devotees of the Lord on the hill had only to be told that, "Your god is same one who is now at Tiruchchukanur at the foot of the hill."

Why not Kanchi?

Second, why Trichannur was selected for this purpose. Kanchi was site of more important and prosperous Vishnu shrine and was the center of all religio-political activities of all sects of the time, so why not Kanchi? Temple at Tichakkanur was very unimportant and insignificant, so why this should be selected as a place for a new center for conversion, if the conversion was meant for Saivites. **It is very clear that conversion was meant for the devotees of the Lord on the hill and that the Tichakkanur was selected because it was in proximity to the temple on the hill of Tirumalai.** Other effect of this could have been that it was possible to identify those staunch Buddhists who did climb up the hill in spite of the temple below. These people could be readily identified and persecuted and eliminated.

Even in modern times we find that those who like to convert people to their own faith, have to go into interior and inaccessible areas, that is the place for their field work. Similar was the purpose of Brahmins to woo away the people from the worship of deity on the hill. The selection of Trichkkanur would be considered very appropriate, only if the shrine on the hill would have been a Buddhist shrine and these people who were sought to be converted to Vaishnavism were Buddhists. However, an intermediate stage may be postulated when Buddhist got converted to Saivism, and later to Vaisnavism.

Installation of the silver image on the hill

Afterwards we get another important event occurring on the hill that is the consecration of the Bhoga Srinivasa in 966 A.D. and Shifting of the activities from Tiruchannur and subsequent abandoning of Temple at Tiruchannur. The reason for this is said to be the apprehension of conflict with Saivites.

"...it was stated that the silver replica of Tiruvengadamudaiyan was consecrated in Tirumalai with a view to avoiding any possible source of friction between the Saivites and the Vaishnavites, since a temple for Siva, known as Sri Parasaresvaraswami, was constructed some time after the Tiruvilankoyil in Tiruchochunur. **There is no mention anywhere that tension existed between the two sects at that period in Tiruchochokinur**. It was also pointed out as a result of a close study of the wording of some inscriptions, that the Vaishnavite Temple was doing proselytising work and therefore open to all and that feeding also was open to members of both sects on equal terms. There was therefore the possibility of the friction and the astute Vaishnavas of the day wanted to eliminate all chances of such friction arising at a future date. **Right up to the days of Sri Ramanuja, however, there was no sign of such friction.**" [Raghavacharya: I,120].

Friction among the Saivites and Vaishnavites

Two minor incidents of friction, if it could be so called, are described. One was in 1008, and other 1013 A.D. which were incidences of inquiry by the Officers of the Royal court into the affairs of mismanagement of trust by the temple authorities.

"We do not find any other instance of friction. That about or some time before, the year 1000 A.D. there was some friction as evidenced by the two incidents mentioned in our inscriptions. The reader will now see the wisdom of the Vaishnava leaders of the time in transferring their activities to Tiruvengadam Hill, practically abandoning the Tiruchchukanur Tiruvilankoyil. In a small village the two Temple of rival sects could not have worked in healthy cooperation. It is very necessary to go into the history of the Temple of Sri Parasaresvara to feel convinced of their wisdom." [Ibid. I,124]

"...the Vaishnavites from the date of founding of a Saivite temple apprehended the possibilities of friction and therefore removed the centre of their activities to Tiruvengadam Hill." [Ibid. I,128].

"There is, and there naturally can be, no inscription which would state why the Tiruvilankoyil had for all practical purposes to be abandoned and the Vaishnava activities centered in Tirumalai itself. The Chola rule was in full swing and all the Chola kings were staunch Saivites. There was therefore no wisdom in sticking to Tiruchchukanur. **We have to read between the lines to explain the most important step which the Vaishnavites of the day took**. At that time Sri Alvandar was steering the ship is the Tamil country for the spread of Vaishnavism and he must have advised the Sri Vaishnavas to transfer their activities to Tirumalai." [Ibid. :I,129]

To recapitulate

Before summarising the whole situation we would like to recapitulate the dates:

* 1.Around 826 AD- Proxy Image is installed and Vaishnava activities started at Trichakkanur instead of on

the hill

* 2.966 AD - Bhoga Srinivasa installed on the Hill, and all Vaishnava activities transferred back to hill.

* 3.1006 A.D.- first signs of any friction between Vaishnavas and Saivites.

* 4.Siva Temple constructed not long before 1008 A.D.

* 5.This Siva Temple did not get any grant from Chola Kings till 1073 A.D. in spite of Chola rule starting in 1008.

There was no rivalry at early stage

If some attention is paid to chronology of events it becomes clear that this activity of converting Saivites came at a later date. We are now thinking of time, when both Saivites and Vaishnavites were fighting together to wipe out the heretical sects of Buddhism and Jainism. During earlier times of A.D. 830 or so there was no rivalry between Vaishnavas and Shaivas. That came later, at the times of Ramanuja or so, during the Chola rule. In the earlier times Buddhist were the real enemies of Vaishnavas and Shaivas and they had to be dealt with. So all the activities of all Brahmanic sects were primarily directed against the Buddhists. That was not the time or infighting among the Vaishnavas and Shaivas. Mr. Dave has very rightly remarked, as mentioned earlier, that the **time of emergence of cult of Tirupati was the time of combined fight of Vaishnavas and Shaivas against Buddhism.**

By 966 A.D., things had changed. Buddhists were suppressed. The quarrels among Vaishnavites and Saivites started now. The coming up of a Saiva temple at Tiruchakkanur is said to be the cause of this, as observed by Veera Raghavacharya. It always happens that when a common enemy is put down, the internal rivalries prop up. There may be no surprise if the same happened here. Now the Saivites and Vaishnavites had no reason to work together, as the Buddhists were suppressed. But this is only one aspect.

Indoctrination of masses

The other aspect which is often ignored is that during the activities of the proxy temple, the devotees of the Lord on the hill were indoctrinated to Vishnu worship and they had to be shifted back to the original Shrine on the hill, because it was too great to be ignored, now in the form of Vishnu without any mention about the Buddha avatara. By this time masses had forgotten that it was Buddha they were worshipping as an avatara of Vishnu. Now the devotees are told to worship the Lord as Vishnu, not as a Buddhavtara Vishnu but as avatara of Krishna, prominently. This is more important reason of abandoning Trichokkinur than the apprehension of conflict with Shaivas.

Ramanuja made Tirupati important artificially

Then the great Ramanuja comes on the scene and regularizes worship and adjusts all loose ends, whatever there might have been. A new township, by name Tirupati, is established at the foot of the hill and its importance increased rather artificially, as observed by Veera Raghavacharya:

"... circumstances made it imperative that Tirupati should be made more important by artificial means, such as making it obligatory for anyone having any dealings with the Tirumalai Temple to keep a house in Tirupati." [Ibid.: I,6].

And thus the conversion becomes full, final and irreversible. But until the Vijayanagar kingdom comes, still there is no Garuda shrine, and no Veda recital.

Chapter 23 Chapter 25

Chapter 25
SILAPPADHIKARAN

Our interest in this text is very limited. It is already shown that it was Ramanuja who managed to put sankha and chakra in the hands of murthi and got it declared as a Vishnu Shrine. But some people like to think that it was Vaishnavite Shrine even before that time, the evidence put forward being that of Silappadhikaran. It is an ancient Tamil epic which deals with the tragic story of Kovalan and his wife Kannagi. Kovalan, a merchant's son having lost all his wealth on a courtesan Madhavi, starts with his wife Kannagi westwards to Madura to start a new life, and meets on way a Vaishnava Brahmin from Malabar who was travelling from west coast to visit Vishnu shrines. During this conversation, various shrines are mentioned

Mention of Chakra and Sankha

Dr. Krishnaswami Aiyangar quotes a verse to show the image had a 'fearsome disc' and 'milk white conch' and further observe:

"The term in which the Vishnu shrine both at Srirangam and Tirupati, and the one at Tirumal Trumsolai, are referred to, give clear evidence that shrine at Tirupati had a reputation of being a Vishnu shrine and nothing else, and that reputation had reached so far out as the West coast and people there were in the habit of going on a pilgrimage to Tirupati as they do now as one of the holy Vaishnava centers. A statement like that from an author who was not himself a Vaishnava, and who makes the statement no doubt in poetry, and in the course of romantic epic, does not invalidate the general position that the temple at Tirupati was by common repute a temple dedicated to Vishnu." [Dr. S. K. Aiyangar, op. cit. vol. I., p.51]

If we accept this statement we have to bring back the date of fixing of weapons to the murthi of Lord of Tirumalai to Silappadhikaran's time. We have seen that Tirumalsai Alvar who is said to have been about a century earlier than Silappadhikaran, [Raghavacharya: II:1008] does not mention any weapons. So we have to consider the time of fixing the weapons about 7th to 8th century, instead of Ramanuja's time

But Aiyangar's theory is not acceptable on many counts.

Interpolations cannot be ruled out

a)Firstly, it presupposes that there were no interpolations and the whole of Silappadhikaran, was received by us in its original form. When people have expressed doubts about a book like Venkatachal Itihas Mala about it being a tampered book, how does one suppose that Silappadhikaran which was a subject matter of various dramas acted on village folk theaters since centuries till about 50 years ago, was received by us in original form, and that there was no influence, of Vaishnava faith prevailing in the region for centuries, on this originally nonbrahmnic text.

Date of Silappadhikaran is doubtful

b) Secondly, it presupposes that we know exactly when those particular lines, mentioning sankha and chakra, were written. Unfortunately scholars do not agree with the dates of this epic and there is great confusion about the dates. On the end Sitapati places the text in 18th century, [Sitapati P., Sri Venkateshwara, p. 88] making it unnecessary for our purpose to discuss anything about it. On the other end Kasthuri Sreenivasan, author of modern drama version of Silappadhikaran in English "The Anklet", places the text to 1st or 2nd century A.D. [K.Sreenivasan, *The Anklet,* Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, p. vii]

Dr. Swamikannu Pillai places this text in 756 A.D. [Raghavacharya: II: 1008]. Whether such a precise dating is possible, seems to be doubtful. Also, dating of many other dignitaries based on this date, and calculation seem useless. Veera Raghavacharya has criticised the way Dr. Pillai has estimated the dates of Alwars. [Ibid., Vol. II, p. 996].

This kind of situation makes this text useless as historical literacy evidence, for presence of shankha and chakra on the image in 8th century.

Ilango Adigal

c)Thirdly, its author is said to be Ilango Adigal, a scholar not belonging to brahmnism, but who was either a Jain or Buddhist. His being non-brahmnic, is considered by Aiyangar to be important and the account given by him about the Vengadam hill to be more reliable and authentic. [Aiyangar: I:49] This belief does not really have any basis.

As he belonged to non_brahmnic faith, he would not be expected to go to a Vishnu shrine for worship, and he would not undertake such a hazardous journey, unless he was a serious devotee of the deity on the hill. And if we presume that the deity was at that time considered to be Vishnu, we have to consider that his description was based on preconceived ideas from Puranas. On the contrary these verses should prove that the shrine was not considered brahmin as dignitaries like Ilango Adigal, from non-brahmin (Jain or Buddhist) Royal family visited it.

About the Bow

d)Fourthly, Silappadhikaran does not only describe the *sankha* and *chakra*, but also a bow in the hands. To presume that at one time the Murthi had a bow, but was later removed would not be in keeping with the known history. From this account if we presume that the description of the disc and the conch as given by Ilango Adigal was based on imagination we would not be wrong. Otherwise how do we explain the description of bow? The fact that it mentions that there was bow on the murthi, [Raghavacharya: 45], is very conveniently ignored by scholars while discussing the subject. This is itself should have been sufficient to show that the description given in Silappadhikaran should be treated as description on Vishnu in general and not the description of any specific image.

Tiruvenkatam other than Tirumalai

e)Fifthly, the mention of Tiruvenkatam in Silappadhikaran need not necessarily apply to Tiruvenkatam of Tirupati. For example, it could equally, and rather more appropriately fit the description in Silappadhikaran is in very general terms. In any case, Silappadhikaran is a very poor evidence to show that the murthi had *chakra* and *shankha* on Him, in eighth century, and need not be taken seriously.

What does it prove

And even if one wants to be skeptical, and insists on this description having historical importance, what difference does it make to our thesis? It merely brings back the date of fixing of the weapons to the murthi from Ramanuja's time to Silappadhikaran's time, presuming of course, that this extract from Silappadhikaran was earlier than Ramanuja. The fact remains that the weapons were not originally there, and were fixed by somebody at a later date.

Chapter 24 Chapter 26

Chapter 26
Tonsures at Tirupati

Not only men but also women undergo tonsure.

There is a custom of tonsure which is speciality of this Temple. Many devotees go there with the intention of votive offering of their hair to the Lord. Performing tonsure at this place is considered praiseworthy and believed to confer great merit. Not only the men perform this tonsure but also women,married as well as unmarried offer their hair by getting Mundana performed here. Sri Sitapati observes;

"Another unique custom of Tirumalai is the Tonsure ceremony. Pilgrims to Tirumalai usually offer the hair on their head to the Lord as a devotional offering. Persons in need of the assistance of the Lord,usually take a vow and when they visit the temple,offer their hair at the Kalyaanakatta, special hall erected for this purpose. A bath in the Pushkarini follows the Tonsure ceremony; The pilgrims then enter the temple and worship the Lord." [Sitapati: 1972: 155]

There are legends and inscriptions in this temple for such trivial things, as use of camphor and such materials for the deity, and champaka and tamarind trees. But the most surprising thing about tonsure here is that, though it is being practiced since hoary past, there is not even a legend, let alone an inscription.

No inscriptions mention about tonsure

Shri Sitapati observes:

"The Tirumalai Temple inscriptions mention about food offering etc. made to the Lord, but no mention is made of this curious custom of offering of hair. The custom was perhaps introduced to stress the quality of humility, as well as renunciation of what is usually prized. **It is also possible that this custom came into prominence when the Vaishnavas vigorously started their poselytising activities by setting up missions and by converting people from other sects and beliefs into the Vaishnava fold.** Some fees are collected for the Tonsure ceremony and it is possible that the revenue aspect might have been one strong reason for the introduction of this custom in Tirumalai. Sri T.K.T. Veera Raghavacharya in his book 'History of Tirupati' has reproduced in Appendix I, a reprint of an article published in August 1831 A. D. by an English District Collector of the region about Tirumalai in the Asiatic Journal. The reprint mentions that "offerings or counickee are made generally from interested votives, and are of a very diversity of articles conceivable; gold and silver lumps, coins of all sorts, bags of rupees, copper, money, spices, asafoetida, **the hair cut off the head frequently vowed from infancy, and given up by some beautiful virgin in compliance with her parent's oath.** [emphasis original] From the above it is evident that this custom at least existed in the year 1831 A.D. if not earlier. [Sitapati:154]

Conversion is the main reason for tonsure

In the above account, Sri Sitapati gives three possible reasons for starting the practice of ceremonial tonsure, as follows;

(a) To stress humility,
(b) Conversion of other sects to Vaishnavism, and
(c) Monetary reasons.

Of the above (a) and (c) are not of any importance. Only we have to consider a point of conversion of other sects into Vaishnava fold. Shri Sitapati is not very explicit about his point, or is rather shy, as to why the practice of *mundana* as associated with the conversion of other sects to Vaishnavism. Perhaps devotee in him overrides a scholar in him. What is the relation of *mundana* with the people who got converted? Presuming these other sects were Shaivites, *mundana* has no value in Shaivism. It is certain that *mundana* does not form a traditional method of worshipping Vishnu. Also *mundana* does not form a part of conversion to Vaishnavism, as will be seen from the description of Vaishnava conversion given in Chapter 24. What Sitapati probably means to say (but does not) is that, those converted to Vaishnava fold were already used to, and rather fond of ceremonial tonsure at temples and did not want to give up the practice even after conversion to Vaishnavism. Who were such people? It was one of the old practices of Buddhists, as we know to becomes *Shramaner* or *Shramaneri* and to stay at a place of worship, pilgrimage or a centre of learning for a few days in attendance with the masters, **the essential requirement being the tonsure of head at that time**. This practice of spending few days as Shramaner or Shramaneri, either for learning and spending more time, or for the purpose of ceremonial initiation of Shramaner as a notional gesture for a few days, is prevalent even today, in most of the countries where Buddhism is a living faith. This is true of countries following Southern Buddhism as well as Northern Buddhism.

Tonsure was practiced by the Buddhists

We find innumerable references to this practice in old Buddhist texts. Dr.Anganelal observes:

"*Pravajjya* and *upsampada* were the special *sanskaras* of Buddhists. To accept *pravajjya*, either lifelong or for a few days was considered meritorious and to give *moksha* for all Buddhists. There are four categories of Buddhists with regard to observance of good conduct; *upasakas* who observe five, *upasakas*, who observe eight, *Shramaner* who observe ten and *shramana* or *bhikshus*, who observe two hundred and twenty eight sheelas. First two are for house-holders. Initiation of *Shramaner* is known as *pravajjya* and that of *bhikshu* is called *upsampada*. It is compulsory to become a *shramaner*, before becoming a *bhikshu*. [Angnelal, *Sanskrit baudha sahitya me bharatiya jivan*, (hindi), Kailash Prakashan Lukhnow, p. 159]

Description of rite of Pravajja

He has also given the ritual to be followed at this time.

"Only *bhikshus* could initiate others. We find a detailed account of *pravajjya* of Nanda in Saundarananda and Rahula in Mahavasstu. **First of all the seeker of initiation was tonsured and then given ochre robes to wear.** After wearing this the seeker lay Buddhist was initiated by *Triratna* and *Pancha-sheelas* and *Shramaner* was initiated by *Das Sheela*, (Mahavastu III 268/17-18). After cutting his hair Rahula was initiated with *Trun Sanstaran*, Sariputra holding his right hand and Moudgalayan holding left hand. (Mahavastu III/268- 69.) "After *Pravajjya* the initiated *Bhikshu* had to bow down to *guru* and seek his advice and orders. **"This *sanskar* was open to women also (Divyavadana 318,7) and they too had to shave their heads and wear ochre robes, (Divyavadana 317/31-32.)"**

Tonsure is ancient practice in this Temple

If the idea that the practice of tonsure is related to the conversion of other sects into Vaishnava fold is kept in mind, then it becomes clear that this practice is going on since the days of fall of Buddhism and emergence of Vaishnavism. It is not possible to postulate any later date for the beginning of this custom, because as the days went by the orthodoxy prevailed supreme and the sight of a shaven headed Hindu woman was considered more and more inauspicious. Under these circumstances it is inconceivable that practice of presenting the shaven headed women before the Lord could have started. And it must have been an ancient custom and continued in spite of being ignored by the Puranas, and in spite of being ignored by the writers of inscriptions. Rather, it could possibly be argued that such a neglect of its mention was intentional for obvious reasons that this practice had to be continued much against the wishes of the Brahmins. Therefore, Ramesan seems to be correct when he says;

"This custom of removing hair as a part of religious ceremony has a very hoary past." [Ramesan N., *The Tirumala Temple*, T.T.D., p. 587]

Shaven headed men, let alone women, are inauspicious to Hindu tradition.

It is a well known fact that a sight of shaven headed is inauspicious to a Hindu since long back, because of hatred against Buddhists. There are references to this not only in religious texts, but also in Sanskrit Dramas like 'Mrichacha Katika'

Hindu men have their heads shaven only when somebody elderly dies in the house and women were shaven headed only when they are widows and not otherwise. It is also well-known that sight of shaven headed widow is inauspicious to a Hindu. A glaring example of this was demonstrated by Brahmo Samaj in Bengal, when they arranged a reception of a dignitary by shaven headed widows on a New Moon day just to press home their point of view that neither the shaven headed widow nor the New Moon day was inauspicious.

Story in Vishnu Purana

That even the sight and a talk with a mundaka was considered inauspicious and punishable by several consequences is shown by a story in Vishnu Purana (part III Chapter 18 verse 53 to 100). The summary is given by Dharmanand Kosambi. [Dharmanand Kosambi, *Bhartiya Sanskriti Aur Ahimsa*, (hindi), p.184] It says that a king happened to talk to a *pashandi*, i.e. a shaven headed Buddhist monk, on the day of a *vrata*, as a result of which he was born as a dog then as a jackal and afterwards as a lamb, a vulture, a crow, a duck, a peacock etc. The author concludes this narration by saying;

"It is clear that the author of this puranic story has written it to show that on days of *Vrata* even talking with a

Pashandhi can lead to horrible consequences".

Contempt of Buddhists in ancient Hindu texts

Dr. Ambedkar has given many instances of contempt of Buddhists in the ancient Hindu literature. [*Untouchables*, p. 96]

"That there existed hatred and abhorrence against the Buddhists in the minds of the Hindus and that this feeling was created by the Brahmins is not without support.

"Nilkanta in his *Prayaschit Mayukha I*, quotes a verse from Manu which says:- 'If a person touches a Buddhist or a flower of Pachupat, Lokayataka, Nastika and Mahapataki he shall purify himself by a bath'."

"The same doctrine is preached by *Apararka* in his Smriti. *Vraddha Harit* goes further and declares entry into the Buddhist Temples as sin requiring a purificatory bath for removing the impurity.

"How widespread had become this spirit of hatred and contempt against the followers of Buddha can be observed from the scenes depicted in Sanskrit dramas. The most striking illustration of this attitude towards the Buddhists is to be found in the Mricchakatika ..."

After describing how the monk is insulted and beaten up by Brahmin hero Charudatta, in this dramma, Dr. Ambedkar observes:

"Here is a Buddhist monk in the midst of the Hindu crowd. He is shunned and avoided. The feeling of disgust against him is so great, that the people even shun the road the monk is travelling. The feeling of repulsion is so intense that the entry of the Buddhist was enough to cause the exit of the Hindus. A Brahmin is immune from death penalty. He is even free from corporal punishment. But the Buddhist Monk is beaten and assaulted without remorse, without compunction as though there was nothing wrong in it."

Tonsures followed by Hindus

It has been pointed out that sight of a shaven headed man, let alone a woman, was inauspicious to a Hindu. This does not mean that Hindus were doing tonsure only at inauspicious times. Many examples can be quoted when Hindus indulge in tonsure. There is a ceremony called *Chudakaran* which is one of the *sanskaras* and is said to be to achieve long life. [Pandey: 1969: 94] Pandey avers that this ceremony was not concerned with the dedication of the hair to the deity. It was originally performed in childhood, but now a days it is usually done just before Upanayana. [Pandey:96] It is particularly interesting to note that a tuft of hair is left unremoved on the top and is called *sikha*. It is arranged according to family tradition, number of tufts being decided by number of *pravara* in the family. [Pandey:98]

Tuft of hair was reaction against Buddhism.

Pandey observes:

"Keeping the top hair, in its course of evolution, became an indispensable sign of the Hindus. The tuft and the sacred thread are the compulsory outward signs of the twice born. ... **It may be a reaction against Buddhism and sanyasa"**, Pandey further adds. [fn.]

It is noteworthy that at Tirupati no tuft or hair is left over after the tonsure and thus it is against the tenets of Hindu Sastras.

Vedic Tonsures

The same applies to the tonsures in Sanskaras of Upanayana, Samavartanaa, and also as preliminary tonsure in Vedic sacrifices like Soma festival and Chaturmasya and Agnistoma where tonsure is performed, more as a part of general cleaning of body, rather than as a rite. And in any case, **these tonsures associated with Vedic rites cannot explain the tonsures at Tirumalai for a simple reason that Vedic tonsures are privileges to be enjoyed only by so called 'twice born', whereas, at Tirumalai it is practiced by all castes and predominantly by the non-twiceborns.** Can it be argued that this privilege was passed on by the Brahmins to other castes in later times? This is against the known history of this land. In this country, once any privilege is established, the Brahmins never renounced it for the benefit of others. A glaring example can be cited, when the Brahmins of Maharashtra complained to Brahmin Peshava rulers and got decree against Sonars, who wanted to wear dhoti in a particular fashion, but it was considered exclusive privilege of the Brahmins to wear dhoti that way. [Ambedkar: 1970: 58, *Annihilation of Caste*] If this is the state of affairs in secular matters, can it be surmised that a religious privilege like Vedic tonsure would

be passed on to shudras? So it is futile to say that tonsures at Tirumalai have anything to do with Vedic rites.

Votive offering of hair is contrary to Hindus Sastras

Study of comparative religion shows that in ancient civilizations, tonsure was practiced by Semitic people, the Syrians, the Phoenicians, and the Priests of Isis. About all the above views of anthropologists, Shri Raj Bali Pandey comments that these views are not valid for tonsure in India. It is specially to be noted that offering of hair to the deity is contrary to the sastras. Shri Pandey observes:

"...In the opinion of some anthropologists, however, this ceremony had dedicative purpose in ins origin, that is, hair was cut off and offered as a gift to some deity. But this supposition is not correct, at least so far as Hindu tonsure is concerned. The dedicative purpose was unknown to the *Grihyasutras* and the *Smritis*. ..." [Pandey:95]

Why Brahmins had to concede to Tonsure

The Brahmanic practices always considered tonsure inauspicious, but the system was so deeply rooted in the minds of Buddhist common people that they would not give it up. So it became necessary for the Brahmins to adopt this system like many other Buddhist practices. In the case of tirthas, Puranas and Nibandhas of medieval period prescribed tonsure in temples and *tirthas*. e.g. *Samba Upapurana*, and we find in later Puranas like *Kasi Khand* of *Skanda Purana*, it is advised for pilgrims to undergo shave at a tirtha, with some amendments. Shri J.H.Dave tells us the rules are as follows:

"Whenever one goes to any Tirtha, the usual rule is that one should get shaved at that place, and should observe a fast. But, this rule does not apply in the case of the following four Tirthas: Kurukshetra, Visala, Viraja and Gaya. With respect to ladies, particularly those whose husbands are alive, it has been stated that *mundana* or shaving in their case is to be understood as cutting of their braid of hair by only two finger breadths." [Dave: I, xxiv]

Here we find an example of borrowing by Brahmins of a custom from the Buddhists much against their wishes, because they could not recommend a complete shave for women, unlike the Buddhists.

Ramesan observes:

"Exceptions were introduced to the rule about tonsure. Daksa forbade tonsure, the offering of *pindas* and the carrying of a corpse and all funeral rites to one whose father was alive and to a man whose wife was pregnant. But his prohibition did not apply to penances. The Baudhayanasutra already referred to prohibits the tonsure of women in penances. Angiras 163, Apastamba smrti I.33-34, Brahdyama IV.16, Vradha-Harita IX. 386, Parasara IX 54-55, Yama 54-55, **all provide that in the case of married women whose husbands are alive, and in the case of maidens all their should be held together and only two finger-breadths of hair should be cut off. In the case of widows and ascetics the entire head was to be shaved."** [Ramesan: *Tirumala Temple*, p.591]

Tonsures at Tirthas

Tonsure is also prescribed in ancient Dharmasastras while going on pilgrimage. Padmapurana and Skanda Purana advocate tonsure when starting for pilgrimage. A verse from Vishnu Purana which is also quoted by *Tirtha-chintamani* and *Tirtha prakasha* enjoins:

"Tonsure should be carried out at Prayaga when on a pilgrimage, and on the death of one's father or mother, **one should not in vain (lightly) tonsure the head..."** [Ramesan: 1981: 587]

Here Vishnu Purana has actually enjoined NOT to perform tonsures without a valid cause and in no case this passage of Vishnu Purana can explain the tonsures at Tirumalai. Thus Tirumalai tonsure do not conform with the rules of Puranas either.

Tonsure is not a method of Vishnu Worship

It is also noteworthy that the method of worship of Vishnu Image is described popularly as *Shodas Upachar*. These are 16 ways in which Vishnu Image should be worshipped. It should be noted that *mundana* or tonsure ceremony is not included as one of them.

Tirumalai tonsures are not Tantric or Natha practices

It has been suggested that offering of hair is equivalent to and symbolic of offering of head. This explanation

also is not appropriate for a Vishnu temple because offering of head involves *himsa* which is against the tenets of Vaishnavism, though it may be permissible in Shakti puja.

Ramesan informs us that, seventh century reliefs at Mahabalipuram depict hair offering to the Devi Vakpati, eighth century court poet of Kanauj refers hair offered in a shrine of goddess Vindhyavasani, Tantrika ascetics considered *sikha* as one of Tantric angas to be worshipped at four comers of yantra. Offering of sikha was also an important ritual in the initiation of Tantric ascetics. *Mahanirvan Tantra* notes that *Pitars, Devas* and *Devarsi* and also 'the acts performed in the worldly stage of life reside in the sikha'. The ascetic offers his sikha in fire uttering mantras. Offering of sikha by the initiates is still a practice among the Nathapanthis.

What is the connection of these cults with Vaishnavism? They are both so called heretical cults and much nearer to Buddhism than to Brahmanism. How does one account for Tirumalai tonsures on the Tantric and Natha practices? As a matter of fact Nathism is considered by scholars as a corrupt from of Buddhism and believed to have originated from Buddhist Nikayas during the general decline of Buddhism.

Tirumalai tonsures are not prayschittas

There is one more group where tonsure was undertaken by followers of Brahmanism in ancient times. That is the performance of tonsure as a punishment and sentence by law.

Ramesan observes:

"... To these occasions may be added penances. The idea seems to have been entertained that whatever sin a man commits it becomes centered in the hair, as seen for verse quoted by the *Madanaparijata* and *Prayaschittasam uchchaya Gautama. (27.3), Vasista Dharmasutra(24.5), Baudhayanasutra Dh.S(II.1.98-99)* and others provide for the tonsure of the hair on the head and lips (except those on the eye-brows, the hair on the trunk and the top knot). [Ramesan: 591]

The Brahmins were exempt from capital punishment. Offenses which were punishable by corporal sentence for non-Brahmins, were punishable by tonsure in case of Brahmins. [Manu VIII, 379] It seems strange to the present day scholars that for the same offence, the punishment by ancient law was cutting of an arm in case of non-Brahmin and only a tonsure in the case of Brahmin. Though this discrimination is unfair, it should be realised that the ultimate effect of even this sentences of tonsure resulted in condemnation by the society and deprivation of the means of sustenance, because many times in the case of punishment to the brahmins by tonsure, they were also excommunicated and driven out of the village. Every student of ancient Indian history knows the severity of the sentence of excommunication. It was because of this that many authorities have made exceptions and given some concessions to brahmins under certain circumstances. Ramesan observes:

"... It was further provided by *Parasara* (IXC 52-54), and *Sankha* (pp.290-291) that in the case of a king or a prince or a learned Brahmana, tonsure of head should not be insisted upon, but that they should have to undergo double the usual penance and the *dakshina* would have to be double. The *Mitakshara, III.325* quotes a verse of Manu (not found in the printed text) - 'tonsure of the head is not desired in case of learned Brahamans and kings except in the case of those guilty of mahapatakas, of cow-killing or of being an avakirnin ..." [Ramesan: 59]

It is of course improper to think that the people who undergo tonsure at Tirumalai are sentenced to undergo any punishment, neither is there any feeling of guilt in their minds. They undergo tonsure gladly with full religious reverence, and this type of tonsure as *prayaschittas* has nothing to do with tonsures in Tirumalai.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we may say about Brahmanic tonsures, that:

* 1. Hindu Sastras do not recognize tonsure as votive as an offering to a deity.

* 2. Preservation of tuft of hair on the top is obligatory for the followers of Brahmanism.

* 3. Young unmarried maidens and married women are not to shave.

* 4. Only widows are shaven headed.

* 5. Shaven headed men, and not only women, were considered inauspicious.

* 6. Shaving was done as punishments and in case of death of relatives.

* 7. In short, it was an occasion for sorrow and mourning.

Therefore, the traditional custom of tonsures performed at Tirumalai as religious ceremony can not be viewed upon as a custom of the Brahmanic religion, and as it is an unique and important part of worship at Tirupati, the shrine at Tirumalai could not have been a Brahmanic centre in olden days. There is a remarkable absence of legends or epigraphs about tonsures, denoting the displeasure of priestly leaders of the shrine, about it. All these go to prove that the practice of tonsure at Tirumalai is the relic of old Buddhist custom, and suggests the Buddhist origin of Tirumalai Deity.

Chapter 25 Chapter 27

Ratha Yatra is an important part of Bramhotsawam

Among the several festivals conducted on the Hill, a festival called Brahmotsavam is the most popular one drawing huge crowds. Varaha Purana mentions Brahmotsavam is so called because the very first festival is said to have been conducted by Brahma. The following is the summary of description of these Brahmotsavams as given by Sri Sitapati. [Sitapati:143]

"The festival actually commences on the first day with the Dhvajarohanam caremony in which the Lord's flag with the Garuda emblem is flown on a flag staff erected next to the Dhvajastambhan. ... The Lord's Utsava Vigraham (with or without his consorts Sridevi and Bhudevi) is also taken in procession twice--once in the day time and again in the night time with the appropriate Vahanam..."

"The important festival days are the fifth, eight and eleventh days. The morming procession of the Lord on the Seventh day with Surya Prabha Vahanam is also worth seeing.

"The Utsavam on the night of the fifth day is called the Garuda Seva or Garudotsavam. On this day the processional deity alone is taken in procession on the Garuda; the consorts of the Lord are not seated by His side on the Vahanam as usual. On this day, the Lord is given 'Uyyala Seva'in the evening. This Uyyala Seva or 'Seva in the Swing' takes place in the open area near the Dhvajastambhan..."

"The deity is then taken and installed on Garuda Vahaanam...The vahanam is then taken in procession around the east, west, north and south Mada streets of Tirumalai. The Lord has the usual paraphernlia during this procession such as *Chatra, Chamara, Mangala Vadyas,* recital of the holy books etc.

"The car festival taakes kplace on the eighth day. This 'Rathotsvam' attracts the largest crowds during the Brahmotsavam festival days. The Utsava murthi along with the consorts is brought on to the temple car and the temple car are then gaily decorated; the temple chariot is to be taken round the streets of Tirumalai. On the eleventh day of the festival, the processional deity is taken on a Tiruchi Vahanam to the Swami Pushkarni. The Chakram of the Lord (also called Chakrattalvar) then gets a bath in the Swami Pusshkarini... The Brahmotsavam comes to an end with this snana or bathing of the Lord in the Pushkarini."

From this description it should beclear that procession of Deity i.e. Ratha Yatra forms the main and poppular part of this festival. We will see further that Ratha Yatra, though seen in many modern brahmnic temples, is basically a Buddhist practice, and a relic of Buddhist traddition.

Ratha yatra in old records

After the image worship had started in India the practice of festivals, where procession of deities formed the main and imkportant part, was started. Sri Vasudeo Upadhyaya has given ample evidences about Ratha Yatra in various shrines in India from old copper plate inscriptions. The following is the summary of it. [Upadhyaya: 295]

1. Harsha inscriptions of Vigraha Raja of Vikram Samant 1030 describes the gift of four villages on the occasion of Ratha Yatra near Pushakar Tirtha.

2. It is mentioned in the Nadalai gift place of the same dynasty of Vikram Samant 1200 that on the occasion of Ratha Yatra the king used to impose taxes on rich people.

3. Ekpigraphica Indica part 11 p.42 gives inscription of Vikram Samant 1200 of Ram Pal Deva mentioning gift for the purpose of Ratha Yatra.

4. In the Bhimamal gift plate of Udaya Sinha deva, king of Rajasthan describes collection of 40 rupees for the purpose of Deva Yatra.

5. From Anjaneri copper plate of MadhyaPradesh (Corpus Inscription Indecorum part 4 p.150) it becomes clear that people were donating one rupee at the time of Ratha Yatra.

6. Account in ChahaMan inscription for the Ratha Yatra of Jain deities is similar to the account of Hindu gift plates. Lalarai copper plate of Lakhan Pal Deva of Vikram Samant 1133 describes Deva Yatra of Tirthankar Shaantinath. (Epigraphica Indica Part 11 p.51)

7. Plates of Chaha Man King Alhan Deva mentions the payment of taxes by merchants on the occasion of Deva Yatra.

Ratha Yatra was seen by Fa Hain

All the above evidences belong to 11th century and onwards, that was the time when the practice of Ratha Yatra started among the Hindus. As a matter of fact this was an imitation of Buddhist practice of Ratha Yatraa which was seen in Buddhist temples even 500 years before the above mentioned instances of Ratha Yatra in Hindu temples. The following observations by Nalinaksha Dutt will make it clear that Ratha Yatra existed amongst Buddhist much earlier.

"Both Fa-Hein and Hiuen Tsang noticed another iimportant Buddhist ceremony, viz. procession of images. Fa-Hein saw the Khotan procession reads as follows:- " On a four wheeled chariot is seated in the centre the image of Buiddha with two Bodhisattva on the two sides. The chariot is decorated with seven precious stones, silken streamers and canopies. The king prostrated himself before the image while the queen and the other ladies scattered flowers. The ceremony commenced on the first day of the fourth month and ended on the fourteenth." Hiuen Tsang gives a similar account. I- tsang does not refer to such processions but gives an elaborate account of the daily ceremony of bathing images. He sayss that it was incumbent upon the monks of a monastery to wash the image of Buddha daily with scented water and other suitable requisites." [Dutta: 1970: 193]

Sarkar's views that the Ratha Yatra of Jagannath, Balaram and Subhadra at Puri is nothing else but a transformation of Ratha Yatra of Lord Buddha surrounded by Bodhisattva and that this Ratha Yatra was seen by Fa Hain in 5th century, so also Dave's view that Puri is Dantapura, where sacred Tooth of Buddha was preserved, is already mentioned in Chapter 3.

Ratha Yatraa is against Chaturvarna system

Why Ratha Yatra cannot be considered as Brahmnical practice would be clear if we consider that the Varna dharma which led to caste system is *sine quo non* of Brahmnism. It is not possible for a Hindu to indulge in activities which will be inducive to the mnixing of various castes. And what is a Ratha Yatra, if it is not the free mixing of people of differnetr castes. Not only the deities but also the priests are exposed to people of various castes in a Ratha Yatra. Ancient Hindu literature is full of evidence to show that free mixing of people of different castes is sacrilegious to Brahmnical tenets.

Even those who do not consider that Lord Buddha's main message and purpose was to abolish caste sysgtem, e.g. L.M.Joshi also think that Buddha's teachings led at least to lessen the barriers of caste.

And all forms of Buddhism, including Tantrik Buddhism, from ancient to modem time, howsoever so called corrupt, never gave any importance to varna Dharma and always denounced the caste. Vajra Suchi Upanishad e.g. which has tremendous arguments against caste and which was tried to be shown to belong to Brahmanic religion by some recent scholars, is in fact also a Buddhist text, not withstanding its name as an Upanishad. It might be interesting to know that a Marathi shudra saint poet Tukaram in 17th century got his Brahmin disciple Bahinabai to translate it in Marathi.

How can it be expected of a devoted propagator of Chaturvarna system,to inddulge in activities like Ratha Yatra, where people will be free to take part in it without disclosing their castes.

As is well known "the Agamas proclaim curses on the man who goes into the temple with upper part his body covered ..." [Raghavacharya: 193] Thus there are arrangements in temples to know who the Shudras are, making it obligatory for male devotees to remove upper garments to see the presence or otherwise of Yadnyopavitam, so that appropriate mantras could be used for a particular devotee. In Tirupati though there is no caste distinction like Pandharpur or Puri while distributing prasad and Dharma Darshana etc., still at certain Arjitha Sevas of the Lord, male devotees mostly remain present without garments above the waist.

Shudras have different mantras in Vaishnavism

We have already seen that, in the Mantra "Om Namoh Narayana", already referred to as *Ashtakshara* or *Tirumantram,* word "Om" is omitted for the Shudras, by some sects. Those conversant with history of Maharaja Shahu of Maharashtra, will remember the episode that a brahmin priest, who after a visit to dancing girls used to attend the palace for puja, without a bath, and he refused to perform puja according to Vedic rites and insisted on puranic lore, on the ground that Chhatrapati Shahu was a shudra, and not entitled to Vedic Puja.

So Ratha Yatras are shramnic in origin, started by Buddhists and then by Jains but later on copied by

people of Brahmnic reigion, much against their wishes and now it presists there as a relic of Buddhist faith.

Venkkateswara Suprabhatam

Mention may be made here about 'Waking up ceremony' of Lord performed every morning by siging the praises. These verses were composed, according to tradition in the 14th century. Vedas were ordered to be sung in 1430 A.D. There are a few verses from this *'Venkatesvara Suprabhatam'* which need to be mentioned. One of them reads:

"Thy devotees that shine by wearing thy dust on their heads, desire not either Heaven or Moksha; they grieve that another 'Kalpa' may deny them thy grace. Oh Sri Venkatachalpati! Awake." [Sitapati:115]

"A 'Kalpa' runs for about the few lakhs of years. According to tradition, the Lord of Tirumalai is the deity of Kaliyuga, in Sweta Varahakalpam. The position may change in the Kalpa that follows. Hence the grief and distress of devotees of the Lord of Tirumalai." [Sitapati:115]

In another verse ten avatars are mentioned without the Buddha avatra.

As per Maricha Samhita 'Sri Vimanarchana Kalpa' the Lord is worshipped as GURU [Sitapati:8] It is also well known that Panduranga and Jagannatha are praised as 'Guru', but both are considered to be *'mouni'* in *Kaliyuga*. i.e. they maintain silence during the kaliyuga. This appears to be very effective devise used by brahmins to preach the people that Lord will only give *darshana,* but will not preach, i.e. His Teachings are not to be followed in *kaliyuga*. The same is true of Tirumalai. Here also Lord is considered *'mouni'* by the Varaha Purana. [Sitapati:124] It is noteworthy that both Jagannatha and Vithala are confirmed to be old Buddhist shrines, as already seen.

Chapter 26 Chapter 28

Chapter 28
Temple and Its Sculptures

Temple as was in pre-Ramanuja days

The present temple has two gopurams and two outer prakarams with two cicumambulatory paths; the third path around the sanctum called *Mukkoti pradaksinam* is now incomplete because of later construction and is open only for one day in the year. This pradaksinam together with the sanctum and hall are the only structures of pre-Ramanuja days, except for two wells of that period, which concern us. The different structures in the temple complex are construccted at different times by different people, but we are concerned chiefly with the main temple.

Water from wells in the temple was not used for Puja

Pulla Bhavi, a well of flowers, which was dug by Rangadasa, a shudra, who discovered the image of the Lord, lying buried in an ant-hill, is a step well and used for disposing flowers since days of Ramanuja. [Sitapati:56]

The legend says that:

"... Water for abhishekham of the Lord in the olden days was being obtained from the Papanashanam tirtham in the Tirumalai hills. Once Sri Alavandar present at Tirumalai noticed that Tirumalai Nambi who was at this time performing the duty of carrying water for the temple was not in a position to do so due to sickness. Sri Alavandar therefore prayed to the Lord that He should accept the water from the well in the temple constructed by one Rangadasa. Sri Ramanuja who heard the above legend during his visit to Tirumalai also ordained that the waters of Papanashanam Tirtham, Akash Ganga Tirtham and the well called Sundaraswamy well (or Bangaru Bhavi) are holy and can be used for all purposes in the temple ever since." [Sitapati:63]

In spite of two wells being present in temple premises, the water of these wells was not being used for puja etc. till then. This unusual practice, may be due to caste prejudices. It is well known that caste rules are strict about water and food. An incident a few years ago could be cited of a severe devastating cyclone hitting the Andhra coast destroying many villages. It will be remembered that the volunteers rehabilitating the victims of the great tragedy were faced with the problem of cleaning two wells in each village because caste Hindus refused to share water from same well with the untouchables, even in the face of such a grave calamity. So we need not blame the pre-Ramanuja Brahmins for not using the water from shudra's wells. Actually this should denote the importance of the work, towards the lower castes, of Ramanuja who also is said to have allowed the untouchables to enter the temples for one day in the year. [K.A.N.Sastri:430]

The more important point is how did it happen that two wells were allowed to be dug up by a shudra, within temple premises. It is possible only if the temple belonged originally to lower caste people. At a later date, even Alvars, we are told, hesitated to set foot on the hill due to their low caste.

Time of temple construction

Sanctum sanctorium or garbha griha which was called Koyil Alwar is described:

"... the walls of the garbha griham as they exist at present are made up of cut stone, and can be dated to belong to the 8th century or 9th century A.D. at the earliest. The temple type consisting of a Garbha Griham with a Mukha mantapam with a Pradikashanapath got established in South India about 8th century A.D. In view of this we cannot say with any degree of certainty that the present temple structure belongs to the period earlier than 8th century A.D. ..." [Sitapati:82]

Garbha Griham

"The garbha griha is almost square shaped structure (12 feet square). The walls of garbha griham as well as the walls of Sayana mantapam, otherwise called Mukha mantapam, are really double structures with two separate sets of walls enclosing some air space between them. This was perhaps necessitated by construction of the additional structures comprising of the Mukhoti pradikshanam built later." [Sitapati:82]

"... the Garbha Griham houses only one Mula murthi and **the temple in Tirumalai is unique in that it is the only Eka- murthi temple for Vishnu in India."** [Sitapati:83]

The non-recognition of other murthis is the basic principle of the Tirumalai temple. [Raghavacharya:215]

Snapana mantapam

The Snapana Mantapam or Tiruvilankoyil is the other structure of Pre-Ramanuja days. It was here that the Bhoga Srinivasa, the silver replica donated by Pallava queen, was consecrated in the year 966 A.D. Its pillars bear the Vaishnava bas reliefs now. But these pillars are not original pillars. The original pillars were circular while pillars now in mantapam are square in shape. [Sitapati:79]

Double walled structure

The sayana mantapam, a chamber of 18' 6" square is devoid of any noteworthy a sculptures. [Sitapati:81] This is also a double walled structure like garbha griha. [Sitapati:82]

T.K.T. Veera Raghavacharya observes:

"The real shape and size of the temple in Tirumalai have remained a secret or a riddle... Even persons who are intimately and hereditarily connected with the working of the temple are not aware of these. ... For the first time we learn that Sanctum Sanctorium, consisting of the Garbha griham and the mukhamantapam attached thereto, is a double structure. **Two distinct and separate set of walls do exist, with space (or antaramandalam) in between. The vimanam was built along and in connection with the new (or outer) walls of the garbha griham between the years 1244 and 1250 A.D.** [emphasis orignal] The outer faces of the walls of the old temple bore at least four ancient inscriptions in Tamil referable to years 966 A.D. to 1013 A.D. True copies of these were taken before the new walls were built to enclose the old ones..." [Raghavacharya:193]

"... The method employed for constructing a new temple did in no way adversely affect the old structure, which would have been considered sacred because it was presumed to have been built by the devas themselves." [Raghavacharya:200]

Purpose of renovation was to make Temple conform with the Agamic Rules

About the motive of the renovation, we are told:

"There were beautiful temples built for images made and consecrated by man, Manushya pratishta, in other places. Here was a poor temple on the most sacred Hill for a Svayam- vyakta Murti. The temple was attracting streams enlightened men...the surface of these walls would have been plain and devoid of any architectural features and sculptures worth mentioning. It probably had no Vimanam to boast of... **Every other temple of fame conducting puja according to Vaikhanasa or the Pancharatra agama had a garbhagriham whose architecture answered to the agamic stipulations.** Sri Vira Narsinga... set his heart on building a temple worthy of his patron Deity and of his own importance... To the Vaikhanasa archakas also it meant a provision for the installation of all or most of the deities which according to their agama should find representation even during the Daily puja." [Raghavacharya:200 emphasis ours]

The walls of the Garbha Griham were not conforming to Agamas. There were no alcoves outside. So such alcoves were made on the renovated temple to agree with Agamic norms.

T.K.T. Veera Raghavacharya further observes:

"...**new pradakshanam was designed to hold within it one or more images for worship** ... a niche is sculptured in the body of the wall. There are similar niches on the western and northern walls also. There was (and probably still is) one on the east wall also. ... **These niches form an essential feature of the design of garbhagrihams according to the Vaikhanasa as well as the Pancharatra agamas..."** [Raghavacharya:205 emphasis ours]

In the renovated temple the first avaram or pradkshnam deliberately built was soon closed, and Ramar Medai was formed by putting walls across the eastern part of the path. This path is now open for only one day in the year of Vaikuntha Ekadasi day. This was the result of conflict between Vaikhanasas and Pancharatras, we are told. T.K.T.Veera Raghavacharya observes.

"It prevented the Pancharatras from making an attempt to form a chatur murti alayam by putting up Pancharatra images on the south, west and north walls of the garbhagriham." [Raghavacharya:209]

Late appearance of Garuda shrine

The salient points to note are that even after the addition of Tiruvilankoyil in 966 A.D., the temple was very

modest and devoid of all murthis according to Vaikhanasa system, though legends say that Sage Vaikhanasa was the first to worship the Lord of Tirumalai. **As a matter of fact, the worship as per Agamas had already started in all other important Vishnu temples in South India, much before this time, e.g. in Srirangam in 756 A.D.** [Sitapati: 202]

Another notable feature is that Dwajastambham and Bali pitham are found in the outer avaranam which is rather strange as they have to be within first avaranam. So it is to be postulated that they were shifted at the time of construction of Tirumannani mantapam in 1417 A.D., and even this position, though recognised as a last resort, is in the wrong quarter. [Sitapati:59]

Another important point to note is about the Garuda shrine. This shrine was constructed rather crudely in 1417 A. D. Earliest mention of Garuda in Tirumalai Devasthanam inscriptions is in 1446 A.D. and it is seen that offerings given are only for the Garuda figure painted on the flag. The earliest inscriptions mentioning Garudallwar residing in his own shrine is in the year 1512 A.D., which is presumed to be the time of its comming into being. [Sitapati:76] It is rather strange that though since Ramanuja's time, it is considered as a Vishnu shrine, the Garuda shrine should make its appearance so late.

Chapter 27 Chapter 29

Chapter 29
Identification of Tirupati with Potalka

The origin of Tantrika Buddhism was previously thought to be in Assam and Bengal. But now it is believed that it actually started in South India, and Potalka, a mountain in South India, was its centre.

Trantrika Buddhism started in South India

L.M. Joshi observess:

"Potalka Parvata has been suggested as a third possible early seat of the origin of Vajrayana in the far south apart from Dhanyakataka and Sriparvata; this suggestion is based on the authority of Hsuantsang, the Sadhanamala and the Gilgit text of the Sarva-tathagatadhisthaanasattv-avalokana Biddhaksetra-san-darsanavyuha. South Indian origin of Tantrika Buddhism, already suggested many years ago by the late pt. Rahula Samkrtyayana, has been further strengthened by fresh evidence extracted from the Sekoddesatika, the Blue Annals, the Biography of Dharrmasvamin and the above mentioned Gilgit text. These authorities finally overthrow the generally accepted theory of Bengali origin of Tantrika Buddhsim" [Joshi:1977: xx and xxi]

The text quoted above was translated by Itsing in A.D.701. N. Dutt, the editor of the text, places this book in the fifth or sixth century A.D. The text locates Buddha's residence at Potalka, in South India referred to by Hsuan-Tsang as the abode of Avalokitesvara. [Joshi:1977:251]

Hiuen Tsang has described various places from South India as Buddhist centers, three among them being the most iportant. These were Dhanyakataka, Sri Parvata and Potalka. Out of these three, Dhanyakataka and Sri Paarvata have been identified with Amaravaati and Nagarjuna Konda respectively. The third one i.e. Potalka is not identified as yet, to any degree of satisfaction, though it is lately suggested to be identified with Potarlankaa in Divi Taluq of Dist.Krishna not far away from Amaravati - Bhattiprolu region, where exuberance of the images of Tara was found. [Sarma: 1988: 21]

Potalka was inaccessible

First point to note is that Potalka was most inaccessible part. Taranatha has given the following description of this. [*Taranatha*: 1980: 181] He mentions Acharya Dignaga being born in a Brahmana family in the city of Singavakta near Kaanchi in south. He received *Pravajjya* from Nagdatta, who was *Vatsiputriya* and also learned in doctrines of *Tirthikas*.

Narrating about the period of Dignaga, Taranatha mentions about an Upasaka going to Potalka, or Potala, the residence of Avalokitesvara and Arya Tara. This Upasaka was sent to Potalka to invite Avalokitesvara. Upasaka knew that journey was long and hazardous and risky to life. He took with him a road guide to Potala and "...Interestingly, Tg contains a work attributed to srimat Potalka Bhattaraka (Avalokitesvara), with the title Potalka-gamana-patrika (rglxxii.51,fn). [*Taranatha*:181]

About the identification of Potalka, many efforts have been made in modern times. Sri L.M.Joshi has summarized the position about the identification in the following words.:

"This Potalka is located by Hsuan-tsang in Malakuta, identified by Cunningham with a tract between Madura, Tanjore and Travancore. Nandolal De suggtested that Potalka lay in Western Ghats. N. Dutt suggests that modern Potiyam may represent Potalka. This Potalka was near Dhanyakataka and Sripavata, which places have been identified with Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda respectively..." [Joshi: 1977: 257]

Hiuen Tsang's description

The description of Potalka in Hiuen Tsang's own words, is as follows.:

"To the east of the Malaya mountaains is Mount Po-ta-lo-kia (Potalaka). The passes of this mmountain are very dangerous; its sides are precipitous, and its valleys rugged. On the top of the mountain is a lake; its waters are clear as a mirror. From a hallow proceeds a great river which encircles the mountain as flows down twenty times and then enters the southern sea. By the side of the lake is a rock-palace of the Devas. Here Avalokitesvara in coming and going, takes his abode. Those who strongly desire to see this Bodhisattva do not regard their lives, but, crossing the water (fording the streaams), climb the mountain forgetful of its difficulties and dangers, of those who make the attempt there are very few who reach the summit. But even of those who dwell below the mountain, if they earnestly pray and beg to behold the god, sometimes he appears as Tsz'-tsai-t'-ien (Isvara-deva), sometimes under the form of a Yogi (a Pamsupata);

he addresses them with benevolent words and then they obtain their wishes according to their desires. Going north-east from this mountain, on the border of the sea, is a town; this is the place from which they start for the Southern sea and the country of Sang-Kia-lo (Ceylon). It is said commonly by the people that embarking from this port and going south-east about 3000 li we come to the country of Simhala." [Samuel Beal, *Buddhist Records of the Western World*, pp. 233 ff.]

Similarty of physical features

From the above account of Hiuen Tsang, and also as mentioned by Taranatha the following points seem to appear important.

* 1. Journey to Potalka was hazardous,and even guide for traveling had to be used, and very few people attempted to reach the hill.

* 2 On the top of the mountain there was a lake of clear water. * 3 By the side of lake there was a rock palace of Devas. Avalokitesvara was taking his abode here. Sometimes He appeared before his devotees in the form of Yogi or Isvara Deva.

Even now we find that Tirupati has got clear water lake and journey is hazardous.

Potalka was being Hinduized

Commenting on this accopunt Sri L.M.Joshi observes;

"The Potalka mmountain in this country was the favourite resort of Avalokitesvara who still appeared before his devotees in the guise of Pasupata Tirthika or as Mahesvara.

This last passage seems to indicate that **Avalokita who has many attributes of Siva, was now in the process of being converted into Hindu god Siva..."** [Joshi: 1977: 39]

We could like to suggest, that this Potalka as described by Hiuen Tsang, can be identified with present day Tirupati Hill and we can presume that at the time of Hiuen Tsang the Buddhist influence was declinning and the shrine was in the process of being Hinduised. Mere presence of abundance of Tara images is not enough to identify Potalka. It must be shown that the Avalokitesvara was in fact being converted to Hindu God, the fact clearly mentioned by Hiuen Tsang. **Search for Potalka has to be among the Buddhist shrines converted to Brahmnic use.**

Similarity in name

It is worthy to note that the earlier name of Vengadam, was 'Pullikunram' i.e. the hill of Chieftakin Pulli. This is mentioned in poems of Mamulanur, the most important of the Sangam poets. [Sitapati: 87] It was perhaps, more popular name among the Buddhists, as Pullis were Buddhists, and hence it was used by Hiuen Tsang, and perhaps name Potalka has been derived from Pullikunram. It is reasonable to presume that Pullikunram has become Po-ta-io-kia"

Chapter 28 Chapter 30

Chapter 30
Conclusion

Precedents of usurping Buddhist Temples for Brahmanic use

It was shown that Image Worship originated amongst the Buddhist and that the struggle between Brahmins and Buddhists was the cause of it. Brahmanism took over many Buddhist Temples for Brahmanical use, for example Ter, Chezarala, Aihole, Undavali, Ellora. It was shown that chiseling out Buddhist images was the method used in many temples, and Shaivas and Vaishnavas were together in this. Various other examples from Bengal, Puri, Badrinatha, Delhi, Nalanda, Ayodhya, Bodh Gaya, Sarnath and Sringeri are also seen, with special reference to Guntepalli, and also role of Puranas in claiming the Buddhist places and retaining them. We summarized the scholars' views who have proved that Jagannatha of Puri, Vitthala of Pandharpur, Lord Ayyappa of Sabarimala in Kerala, Draksharama and Srisailam in Andhra were once Buddhist Temples. The relation of Tribals with Buddhism with reference to Puri, Srisailam, and Pandharpur was also discussed.

Image of the Lord

We saw the traditional story of Lord of Tirumalai, the Brahmanic explanation of absence of weapons on the image, and noticed how cleverly the device of 'self manifestation of murthi' is used to obscure the scientific historical inquiry. We noted various earliest Vishnu shrines. We saw that earliest popular from of Vishnu was reclining and not standing. It is stressed that there are many records of Vishnu shrines in South India, even in the vicinity of Tirupati but Tirupati is not amongst them. There is no mention even in Bhagavat Purana, let alone Mahabharata, Ramayana and Vishnu Purana. That the reason of its absence in epigraphical, as well as literary sources, was that it was unimportant as a Brahmanic shrine because it was a Buddhist shrine.

We also saw how various forms of Vishnu images were ordained to be made and that Lord of Tirumalai does not resemble any of these forms; and that the Image resembles Bodhisattva Image. The Image does not conform to Vishnu Images and is either a pre- Agamic Image or of 'Different Class by itself', **and indeed, that class is the class of Buddhist Images converted for Brahmanic use.**

The nature of image of the Lord was always a disputed matter. Court dispute in 11th or 12th century A.D. claims of Shaivas and Vaishnavas, the points against it being Vishnu as argued by Shaivas, points in favour of it being Vishnu as argued by Vaishnavas, were studied. It was Ramanuja who managed to place the weapons in the hands of the Murthi. It is clear that an image which was neglected, cannot be Brahmanic one. Shaivas and Vaishnavas conspired to claim the murthi for Brahmanism. We saw how it cannot be Harihara or Devi murthi.

Account in VIM is discussed in detail. Is it a book of fables? Every palm leaf text is not to be discarded. Activities of Ramanuja as mentioned in VIM are borne out by archaeological evidences coming soon after his age, and it is a historical fact, that the Murthi was without weapons before Ramanuja.

The theory of 'Vyakta-avyakta', based on Alvaras' account by modern scholars, is a myth. Verses of Alvaras had gone into oblivion, Natha Muni recovered these verses by yogic powers, Acharyas wrote *Taniyans* thus possibility of their views being quoted as those of Alvaras cannot be excluded. Even then there is no description of murthi in Alvaras' writings. But the present day scholarship is bent upon propagating this theory. The Murthi existed before the Alvaras and it does not become a Hari-Hara or a Vishnu Murthi just by Alvaras praying it as such. The description of the Murthi by Alvaras does not agree with the conception of Hari-Hara or of Vishnu.

None of the Early Alvaras described the Murthi. Tirumalsai Alwar, even describes Murthi without weapons. Description of Murthi by Nammalwar is conceptual. Even otherwise, the Alvaras and Naynaras were hostile towards Buddhists, and their evidence is useless in discussing a claim for a Buddhist image. We also saw that Tirumalai was a compromise site among the Saivites and Vaishnavites.

On inconographical examination of Lord's Image, we noticed that Vishnu Images usually have four arms, and two armed Vishnu images are very few and of small size. Mudras of hand are more common in Buddhist images and weapons are a must in Vishnu images. We saw that Lakshmi was Buddhist deity. Even in literature, Lakshmi was not related to Vishnu, Lakshmi got recognition as a consort of Vishnu only since Alvandar's time.

We saw that the only difference in appearance between Vishnu and Avalokitesvara images lies in weapons. Dhyani Buddhas were absent in many Buddhist images. Does Lord of Venkatesvara conform to Buddhist images? This has answer in affirmative. The pedestals of images have distinctive features, but the pedestal of Lord of Tirumalai is covered, Why? Was there a Buddhist formula on the pedestal? Jata Jutas etc. are not

against Buddhist character, neither is Yadnopavitam. Presumption of Vajra-lepa is essential to explain certain points about the Murthi like Srivatsa, Lakshmi, crescent moon mark etc.

History of Tirupati

India was land of Nagas and its language was Tamil. Nagas were supporters of Buddhism. The region of Tirupati was within Asoka's Empire. Earliest Inscriptions found were definitely Buddhist, and South India was free from Brahmin influence. Tondamandalam was the land of Nagas and there was no Murthi in Vengadam in Sangam Age. Murthi came into existence during Buddhist rule. Old name of Vengadam was Pulikunram,land of Pullis who were Buddhists. Later rulers were Tiraiyans of Pavattiri who were different from Tiraiyans of Kanchi.

Rulers of Vengadam were Kalabhras who were Buddhist. Kalabhras fought against Brahmin supremacy and were abused by Brahmin epigraphists after their rule ended. The emerging importance of Lakshmi cannot explain the change in subscription in the epigraphic records. The word Emperuman was not necessarily used with reference to Vishnu alone, but could also mean Buddha. Emperumandiars or Devadasis were degraded Buddhist nuns is clear from many evidences.

The first epigraphic records are not at Tirumalai, but at Trichakkanur, and these records mention of the proxy image being installed at the foot of the Hill around 830 A.D. Purpose of this proxy image was religious conversion, and not mere convenience. How conversion was carried out is explained. After the purpose of conversion was served to a great extent, Silver Image was installed on the Hill and all activities transferred there. Friction among the Saivities and Vaishnavites cannot be the sole cause of shifting of activities to the hill and abandoning the proxy temple, as there was no rivalry at that stage.

Socio-political conditions need to be taken into account. Kalivarajya was started to change laws. Anti-Buddhist activities were at peak. Reason for Buddha being given place in avatars, was strategical and not on principle. Puranas invented stories to capture and retain Buddhist places of worship. New Puranas were written and old edited and re-edited to give stories for new revival of Brahmanism, and supporting chaturvarnya and Sthala Puranas and myths invented to capture and retain the Buddhist places of worship. This latter purpose of Puranas is not yet properly explored. Shaivas and Vaishnavas were together in uprooting Buddhists and Jains, e.g. at Ellora Shaivas and Vaishnavas occupy two walls in a hall. The Rathas at Mahabalipuram were Buddhist, and are in an unfinished state because of anti Buddhist feelings at the time.

The rise of Rajputs was for suppressing Buddhism. Agnikula Rajputs, *Hiranya-garbha-prasuta* Kings of South India and Ranas of Mewar are explained. Activities of Kumarila and Sankara and other Acharyas were all anti Buddhistic. Therefore, the real reason for Proxy Image was conversion and not mere convenience of devotees. The people whole conversion was sought, were Buddhists. That is why Kanchi is not selected. Indoctrination of masses is done during this time of activities of proxy temple.

That Murthi was without weapons is a physical fact. It only remains to discuss whether the weapons were fixed during the time of Ramanuja or earlier. Those who do not think that Murthi was converted by Ramanuja to Vaishnavism point out that Silappadhikaran has described sankha and chakra on murthi. They like to think that the text belongs to 8th century. So the real question is what was the time when Murthi was given weapons. Our interest in this text is limited to this. This non-Brahmanic text which is said to mention sankha and chakra on the murthi, is quite unreliable evidence to show the presence of weapons, because it also mentions bow. Its description is also on general lines and based on preconceived ideas of Puranas. It could also be referring to Tiruvenkatam other than Tirumalai. In any case, it only suggests that time of fixing the weapons to the murthi was earlier than Ramanuja,if we consider this passage from Silappadhikaran to be of an earlier date.

We saw the unique practice of Tonsure at Tirupati. Here not only men but also women, married as well as unmarried undergo tonsure. Though it is an old respectable and popular practice, no inscriptions mention about tonsure. There are not even legends about tonsure. It seems Brahmins have ignored the practice altogether. After all why? It is proper to consider that Conversion of Buddhists is the main reason for tonsure. Tonsure was practiced by lay Buddhists as well as by Bhikshus. Tonsure is ancient practice in this temple. Shaven headed men let alone women are inauspicious to Hindu tradition. It is a well known fact that a sight of shaven headed is inauspicious to a Hindu since long back, since the decline of Buddhism in India. There are references to this in a Sanskrit Drama Mrichacha Kaitika. Story in Vishnu Purana shown displeasure of Hindus towards tonsure. But there are times when Tonsures are followed by Hindus. They preserve tuft of hair,which was a reaction against Buddhism. Vedic Tonsures have no relation to Tirumalai tonsures. Votive offering of hair is contrary to Hindu shastras. Brahmins had to concede to Tonsure much against their wish. Tonsure is not a method of Vishnu worship, and Tirumalai tonsures have no relation with Vaishnavism, also they are not Tantric or Natha practices. Tonsures at Tirthas in late Puranas have no

relation to Tirumalai tonsures, neither Tirumalai tonsures are praischittas. They are the remnants of Buddhist practices.

Ratha Yatra is main part of Bramhotsawam. Ratha yatra in old records of Hindus start much late, whereas it was Buddhist practice in olden days and was seen by Fa Hain. Ratha yatra can not be a Brahmanic custom as it is against Chaturvarnya system. Puri is Dantapura, where tooth relic of Buddha is worshipped. Shudras have different mantras in Vaishnavism.

The water from wells in the temple was not used till Ramanuja. Time of temple construction was pre-Ramanujan. Garbha Griham, and Snapana mantapam are made later into double walled structures. The great renovation of Temple was done with the intention of making the Temple agree with Agamic rules. The appearance of Garuda shrine is late.

Tirupati is Potalka

Tantrika Buddhism started in South India and its birth place Potalka was inaccessible. Hiuen Tsang's description of Potalka agrees with the physical features on the hill, and Tirumalai could have been Hiuen Tsang's Potalka.

Lastly, we refer again to Ramanujacharya's activities in Tirupati regarding giving of weapons to the Lord. Whatever may be the conviction of a person about the above points, the fact remains that the image of Lord of Tirumalai, originally, had no sankha and chakra. The question now arises whether the artist who started to sculpture the murthi, wanted to make the Murthi of Vishnu or somebody else? Why no weapons were sculptured if he meant to sculpture the image of Vishnu?

Answers to enigmatic problems of Lord of Tirumalai

These are the questions which every student of Ancient Indian History should prepare himself to answer on the basis of recognised historical methods. Our answers to these enigmatic problems of Lord Venkatesvara are as follows:-

1. The image of Lord Venkatesvara was not sculptured by the artist as an image of Vishnu, but that of Avalokitesvara, sometimes in the reign of Kalabhras, after the period of Mamulanur, and before the period of Silappadhikaran, around 3rd to 5th century A.D.

2. Murthi's hands were not holding the sankha and/or chakra. The sankha and chakra were placed in the hands of the murthi at some date later than the date of sculpture of the murthi, and in all probability at the times of Ramanuja. Before Ramanuja, it is unlikely to have these weapons. The reference in Silappadhikaran is not trustworthy in this respect.

3. To consider Venkatachal Itihasa Mala unreliable because it is a palm leaf text is unjustifiable. To tamper with Itihasa Mala would involve a greater labour and greater difficulties than with Silappadhikaran. VIM is a religious book whereas Silappadhikaran is an epic of a tragic romance on which folk dramas are staged from ancient times, and is exposed to modifications in the folk theater, in contrast to VIM.

4. The theory of Vyakta-avyakta is very recent and had to be postulated to explain away Alvaras' writings. There are no references in the writings of Alvaras about the presence of Sankha and chakra on the murthi, and what ever description is there, is conceptual, imaginary, as seen by mental eye, mainly based on Puranic preconceived ideas and in any case untrustworthy as history for proving the presence of weapons, and also to a large extent, as conceived by the commentators, rather than the Alvaras.

5. In the times of decline of Buddhism, no bhikshus were left to look after the shrine which was converted into a Brahmanic shrine.

Avalokitesvara to Vishnu

The gradual process of conversion of Avalokitesvara to Vishnu can be traced as follows:

The initial step seems to be that a proxy image of Lord of Tiruvengadam was set up in the plains and people were told that their God is now conveniently available without undertaking the hazardous journey to the hill.

Next step was to put another Murthi specially meant for conversion of the people to Vaishnavism. At least in earlier stages, the people who got converted, the devotees of the Lord on the Hill, were Buddhists. Later on many be the Saivites were allured for conversion, and so Shaivas had to start a centre at Tiruchokkinur to oppose Vaishnavas, around 1000 A.D. However, an intermediate step can be contemplated where the

Buddhist devotees first became Saivites. This could explain the Avalokitesvara giving Darshana to His devotes in the guise of Maheshvara as mentioned by Hiuen Tsang. And it could also explain the conflict between Vaishnavites and Saivites. It may be noted that identification of Potalka can not be on exuberance of Tara images alone, **but there should be definite evidence to shown that it was being converted to Maheshvara, and search for Potalka should be among the shrines converted for Brahmanic use.**

Subsequently, after all conversions that were possible to be made, were accomplished, and before Saivites opened their centre nearby, the Vaishnavite Brahmins decided to put a new silver image on the hill, and transfer all the attention from the proxy image to the image on the hill.

This intervening time was utilized profitably to make additional structure called Tiruvilankkoyil, installing a new silver image with sankha and chakra in the hands. That the main Murthi had sankha and chakra much before Ramanuja is a myth, the only so called evidence being that of Silappadhikaran which is unreliable.

By this time, the idea of Buddha being the avatara of Vishnu takes root in the minds of people and they start worshipping the Lord on the Vengadam hill with the belief in the Buddha as the avatara of Vishnu. The great Ramanuja comes on the scene. He gives the weapons to the Lord. And the conversion becomes complete.

Even then the Temple does not conform with the Vaishnava Agamas, and hence great renovation was done by Veera Narasimha in 13th century. Now the outer walls are put round old walls, thus concealing the old features, the pillars are changed from circular to square, and Vaishnava bas reliefs now appear on them. Still it remains the only Ek-Devata Vishnu Temple in whole of India and other devatas are not recognised here. Yet there is no Garuda Shrine, which appears very late in 1512 A.D. and Veda recital started only in 1430 A.D.

Ramanuja lays down the rules of worship as a Vishnu shrine, and finally people who were the real devotees forget the real nature of the Lord, and continue to worship the Lord as their Kuladaivatam. These ignorant gullible masses are told that, in kali age this is the form the Lord takes, and you have to worship Him in that form. Masses are also told that the Lord is 'mouni' in kali age; He does not speak, He does not preach, He is guru, a teacher but does not speak, He only observed 'moun' i.e. silence, very much in the same fashion as that of Jagannatha and Panduranga. How cleverly the device of 'mouni' is used in all these three important cults to glorify the Deity and condemn the Doctrine, should be noted. This tradition in later times gives rise to composition of suprabhatam which is composed to praise the Lord as a Guru, but a mouni guru and is lamented that he may not be visible in the next kalpa.

Traditions die very hard. In spite of being converted to Vaishnavism, the devotes do not give up the practice of Tonsure, and it continues till today. People consider the deity as their Kuldevata. Usually the kuladevatas are restricted to a small area but here the vast area is involved. The reason seems to be the spread of Kalabhras, who spread all over south India and convulsed the big kingdoms, and during this process the devotees of Lord on the hill spread all over and continued to worship Him as Kuldevata.

Thus the Buddhist Deity is first vaishnavized mainly due to activities of shudra saint poets, and prabandhams are sung. Later Brahmins came in and sanskritize the scene and now the Lord is brahmanized, in which form we worship Him today.

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